



AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

Forests and Wildlife: Africa's diversity for shared prosperity and security

Skukuza - Mpumalanga, South Africa, 9-13 March 2020

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND AFRICA'S FORESTS : BUILDING
RESILIENCE AND BOOSTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS**

Summary

In this note, the Secretariat presents a brief overview of the situation of forests in the global climate change agenda and the 2030 Agenda, the overall context and challenges of the forestry sector and climate change in the African region. An overview of the FAO main activities supporting mitigation, adaptation and resilience building in support of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) implementation in the forestry sector in Africa is also provided. Finally, the paper concludes with a set of points for consideration by Commission Members and FAO, to boost NDC implementation in the region.

I. Background

1. The results of the 24th and 25th Conferences of the Parties (COP24) of the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) respectively held in Katowice (2018), and in Madrid (2019) revealed the urgent need to raise the ambition substantially to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. There is need for strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change by "holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels." However, current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) under the Paris Agreement would result in a

global increase in temperature of about 3.0° C, twice the agreed limit of 1.5° C (Climate Action Tracker, 2018)¹.

2. Climate change is being experienced in various ways in the African region including through temperatures rise, irregular rainfalls, frequency and longer lasting droughts, high risks of biodiversity loss including flora and fauna. In addition, desertification is increasing at an alarming rate, exacerbating serious food insecurity and livelihood concerns for local communities. Furthermore, sea level rise is predicted as 40-63cm by 2100. The coastal nations of west and central Africa and the Small Islands Developing States are already experiencing negative impacts of climate change, including coastal erosion due to sea-level rise².

3. With about 60 percent of Africa's population residing in rural areas and depending directly or indirectly on agriculture and renewable natural resources (including forest products and services) for their livelihoods, resilience, income, employment, food, feed, energy and wellbeing, Africa's food and agriculture sector is already mostly impacted by climate change. Overall, it is estimated that between 2006 and 2016, the agriculture sectors (including crop, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture and forestry) absorbed more than 26 percent of the total damage and loss from climate extreme events (and this rises to more than 80 percent for drought (FAO, 2018)³.

4. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C⁴ added strong evidence of the need for urgent climate adaptation and resilience action at scale, and especially for the land and ecosystem transition. The IPCC report on Climate Change and Land provided further evidence on the scale of the challenge. The agriculture (including forestry) and land use sectors are priorities in more than 85 percent of African countries' NDCs. Projections are already showing that Africa and Asia will have the highest number of people vulnerable to increased desertification. Populations in areas affected by desertification are likely to face stronger negative effects of climate change⁵.

5. The Paris Agreement, adopted at COP21 in 2015, sent a clear message that forests play a critical and prominent role in achieving the new global climate goal (SDG13), dedicating Article 5 of the Agreement to forests, in which the Parties are encouraged to take results-based payments actions that foster REDD+⁶ strategies, as well as alternative policy approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for integral and sustainable forest management, while reaffirming the importance of incentivizing non-carbon benefits. Furthermore, the Paris Agreement establishes guidelines for carrying out and communicating the ambitious efforts defined in the NDCs, and the characteristics of the progression, in other words, each country's successive NDC will represent a progression beyond the country's current NDC and reflect its highest possible ambition, reflecting its common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of the different national circumstances.

6. Forestry features prominently in countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) - the highest political instrument by which countries communicate their mitigation ambitions and adaptation plans to strengthen resilience, with 86 and 93 percent of developing countries including mitigation and adaptation priorities, in the agriculture and/or Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF)

¹ https://climateactiontracker.org/documents/507/CAT_2018-12-11_Briefing_WarmingProjectionsGlobalUpdate_Dec2018.pdf

² IPCC <http://www.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/sres/regional/index.php?idp=0>

³ <http://www.fao.org/3/CA2607EN/ca2607en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

⁵ IPCC. 2019. Climate change and Land: An IPCC Special Report on climate change, desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security, and greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems.

⁶ REDD+ is a voluntary climate change mitigation approach that has been developed by Parties to the UNFCCC. It aims to incentivize developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, conserve forest carbon stocks, sustainably manage forests and enhance forest carbon stock.

sectors respectively⁷. In the context of Africa, a recent analysis of the NDCs of Eastern African countries showed that all countries in the sub-region include agriculture and/or LULUCF in their adaptation component, and 89 percent of the countries in the mitigation component⁸.

7. The Second Biennial Review on the Malabo Declaration noted that "climate change and variability pose a significant threat to agricultural transformation in Africa", but the continent lags behind on its targets for climate change resilience⁹. There are common challenges that are preventing developing countries from achieving their commitments and ambitions in the agricultural sectors including forestry¹⁰. These are clustered into five intervention areas: (i) Compliance with the enhanced transparency framework of the Paris Agreement; (ii) Coherent policy frameworks for climate action in the agricultural sectors; (iii) Research, analysis and tools; (iv) Capacity development for implementation and action in the agricultural sectors; and (v) Investment for the development of the agricultural sectors.

8. Actions to respond to climate change, both mitigation and adaptation considerations and measures, should be integrated into sustainable forest management policy and practices. Particularly relevant to all African countries are interventions that decrease the vulnerability and increase the resilience of the forests and forest dependent people using landscape and sustainable, equitable and gender-sensitive forest products' value chain approaches.

II. Forests are part of nature based solutions to climate change

9. Forestry and other land use sectors are part of the nature-based solutions. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C examines the various available trajectories for limiting global warming to 1.5° C and 2° C, and land use changes globally and regionally can be found in all projections. The options for the land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF) sector include reducing deforestation and forest degradation, afforestation, reforestation, ecosystem-based adaptation, ecosystem restoration, and biodiversity sustainable management that use local and indigenous knowledge. These changes represent major challenges for the sustainable management of forest resources, considering the many competing demands for land use, including human settlements, food production, fiber, carbon storage, biodiversity and other ecosystem services.

10. Recent studies show that 84 percent of forest disturbances in the Congo Basin region are due to small-scale, non-mechanized forest clearing for agriculture¹¹. Both commercial and subsistence agriculture account for similar importance in terms of deforestation, while fuel wood collection, charcoal production, and, to a lesser extent, livestock grazing in forests are the most important drivers of degradation in the Africa¹². At the same time, there are growing signs that sub-Saharan African forests are under increasing pressure from a variety of sources, including mineral extraction, road

⁷ FAO, 2016. The Agriculture Sectors in the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions: Analysis.

⁸ FAO, 2017. Regional Analysis of the Nationally Determined Contributions of Eastern Africa.

⁹ African Union Commission. 2019. Second Biennial Review Report of the African Union Commission on the Implementation of the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. <https://au.int/en/documents/20200212/second-biennial-review-report-african-union-commission-implementation-malabo>

¹⁰ FAO, 2016: The agriculture sectors in nationally determined contributions (NDCs): Priority areas for international support.

¹¹ Alexandra & Hansen, Matthew & Potapov, Peter & Parker, Diana & Okpa, Chima & Stehman, Stephen & Kommareddy, Indrani & Turbanova, Svetlana. (2018). Congo Basin forest loss dominated by increasing smallholder clearing. *Science Advances*. 4. eaat2993. 10.1126/sciadv.aat2993.

¹² Fisher, B. African exception to drivers of deforestation. *Nature Geosci* 3, 375–376 (2010). <https://doi.org/10.1038/ngeo873>

network development, agribusiness, commercial logging and biofuels, in addition to the traditional subsistence agricultural expansion and charcoal collection.

11. The First Africa Climate Week, organized in Accra, Ghana, in March 2019, provided a critical opportunity to build momentum for raising the level of ambition on the part of African countries to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement and to limit climate change. The need for climate plans to be aligned with development plans was highly emphasized by embedding mitigation and adaptation actions in national development strategies, making data on climate change actions consistent, reliable and comparable, and planning and implementing actions at all levels across sectors in particular for building resilience of landscapes, livelihoods and food systems.

12. The Africa Climate Week gave particular attention to nature-based solutions including large-scale restoration, meriting to be scaled-up and linked to integrated sustainable management of water, land, forests, trees and pastoral resources at landscape and territorial levels. It also discussed climate risk-informed integrated policies, planning and implementation processes required for boosting action.

13. More recently, the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030 was declared on 1 March 2019 by the United Nations General Assembly, with the aim of supporting and scaling up efforts to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems worldwide and raise awareness of the importance of successful ecosystem restoration¹³. The Decade, a global call of action, will draw together political support, scientific research and financial muscle to massively scale-up restoration from successful pilot initiatives to areas of millions of hectares. The Decade, under the coordination of FAO and UNEP with partners, aims at accelerating action towards existing global restoration goals, for example the Bonn Challenge, and regional efforts such as the African Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100) and the Pan-African Agenda on Ecosystem Restoration for building resilience (see FO: AFWC/2020/5).

III. Selected key FAO technical and resource mobilization activities in support of NDC implementation and building resilience in Africa

14. FAO, through its regional office for Africa, is collaborating with the African Union Commission and the NDC partnership¹⁴, through a TCP regional project to support AUC and member countries in planning, implementing and reporting on NDC implementation in Africa. In this context, Agriculture, Forestry and other Land Use sectors (AFOLU) were identified as areas in need of technical support. Part of this project is a compilation of tools, methods and experiences on NDC implementation in the AFOLU sectors in Africa as well as an overview and analysis of progress made so far in terms of NDC planning, implementation and monitoring together with recommendations to advance the NDC agenda in Africa. Furthermore, direct support is currently being provided to 4 pilot countries: Mozambique, Gabon, Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda. Other countries are benefiting from FAO's technical support through other projects.

15. Several REDD+ initiatives are being implemented in the region with the objective to contribute to the global effort in increased carbon sequestration and enhancing biodiversity conservation. One of the largest one is the UN-REDD Programme¹⁵ that aims to reduce forest emissions and enhance carbon stocks in forests while advancing national sustainable development. The current Programme is directly supporting three key countries in the consolidation of their National Forest Monitoring System: Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia. The current phase of the Programme

¹³ <https://undocs.org/A/RES/73/284>

¹⁴ NDC Partnership has over 100 members, including developed and developing countries in all regions of the world, as well as major international institutions and non-state actors. The NDC Partnership works directly with national governments, international institutions, civil society, researchers, and the private sector to fast-track climate and development action. For more information: <http://ndcpartnership.org/>

¹⁵ <https://www.un-redd.org/>

will end in 2020 and has advanced (i) countries meeting the requirements of the UNFCCC agreements on REDD+ (Warsaw Framework); and (ii) the implementation of national REDD+ results-based actions (RBAs) that in time will generate measurable carbon and non-carbon benefits. The programme accompanies targeted countries transitioning from readiness into implementation. The national REDD+ strategies are developed to address the challenges spelt out in the respective NDCs. Over the past decade, the FAO Forestry department has supported over 13 African countries in the development and submission of their Forest Reference Levels (FREL) with recent submissions in 2020 by Liberia, Equatorial Guinea and Sudan. As of February 2020, more than a third of all FRELs submitted to the UNFCCC came from Africa. Moreover, a number of countries have been trained to use SEPAL (System for Earth Observation Data Access, Processing and Analysis for Land Monitoring) that is an innovative open-source and cloud-based platform that help countries measure, monitor and report on forests and land use, offering unparalleled access to granular satellite data and computing power and paving the way for improved climate change mitigation plans and better informed land-use policies.

16. FAO is also involved in several transboundary projects and programmes. In collaboration with the Regional Economic Community for West Africa States (ECOWAS) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), FAO developed and is implementing a project entitled "Global Transformation of Forests for People and Climate: a focus on West Africa". The project is key to the rolling out of the ECOWAS Convergence Plan for the Sustainable Management and Use of Forest Ecosystems in West Africa (adopted in 2013) to mobilize political, institutional, financial and technical support to address transboundary forest issues across the 15 member states. The project targets three focus areas out of the seven priority areas of the convergence plan. The objective is to strengthen decision-making on forests and land management across West Africa by increasing sub-regional knowledge of forest status and dynamics with development of a West Africa knowledge portal on forest resources; strengthening forest and land-related laws, policies and strategies at the sub-regional level towards the development of effective decentralized governance instruments and providing demonstration of community-based sustainable forest and land use practices that are shared within the region and globally.

17. The Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) is a key platform of coordination for like-minded partners that provides finance for policy reforms and field investments at scale in support of National Investment Frameworks (NIF) for REDD+ and low-carbon development. CAFI aims to "recognize and conserve the value of the forests to mitigate climate change, reduce poverty, and contribute to sustainable development", through the implementation of REDD+ national investment frameworks in six African countries. FAO is the implementing agency of CAFI projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (supporting the national forest monitoring system, the agriculture policies for REDD+ and addressing drivers of forests loss in the Equateur province with an integrated approach), Congo (supporting the formulation of a GCF project proposal) and in Equatorial Guinea (supporting the development of the REDD+ national strategy and investment plan).

18. FAO's support to improving peatlands management can help to avoid significant amounts of greenhouse gas emissions. African countries host vast peatland areas, such as the 145 00 km² recently discovered in the Congo Basin containing an estimated 30 Gigatons of carbon equivalent to two years of global carbon emissions, although many of them are yet to be mapped and monitored. If drained for agriculture, forestry, energy or infrastructure development, carbon-emissions and losses of ecosystem services make it harder for countries in the region to achieve their NDCs. Conserved and rewetted peatlands can better help communities and countries in avoiding GHG emissions, ensuring efficient water regulation and filtering, and reduce floods and peatland fires. FAO, UN Environment Programme and other partners work together through various projects and programmes (including the Global Peatland Initiative and a IKI2 project) to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Congo in conserving the peatland carbon and biodiversity. Both the Congo and DRC will be well positioned to achieve their climate goals if peatlands are conserved and sustainably managed. FAO supports those two countries with developing capacity on peatland mapping and monitoring, policy guidance and knowledge exchange through multi-stakeholder platforms.

19. Deploying and scaling up resilience in Africa's Great Green Wall: continued deforestation and land degradation in Africa's drylands contribute to poverty, desertification, hunger and loss of biodiversity and make it increasingly difficult for farmers, forest dependent people and pastoralists and local communities to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Among others initiatives, FAO supports 10 Sahelian countries in restoring degraded land through the Action Against Desertification¹⁶ in support of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative and south-south cooperation. This programme is supported by the European Union and the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) with the overall goal to strengthen the resilience of the region's people and ecosystems. The Great Green Wall targeting over 20 countries in the Sahara and the Sahel region has been deployed to the Southern Africa region under the leadership of the SADC and AUC in collaboration with member countries and partners. FAO with support of funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and in collaboration with SADC is supporting countries in the Southern region of Africa (SADC countries) in preparing GEF-7 Sustainable Forest Management Impact Programme on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes.

20. Support to resource mobilization: FAO is supporting member countries in resource mobilization (including GCF and GEF resources) to boost implementation of NDCs in Africa. For example, FAO is working hand in hand with the GGW national agencies/coordination units and National Designated Authorities (NDA) for the Green Climate Fund (GCF) to prepare a multi country project for scaling-up Resilience in Africa's Great Green Wall to be submitted for funding to the GCF. Four readiness proposals to assess forest and land use sector opportunities in selected Africa/GGW dryland countries and to support climate change adaptation and mitigation interventions, particularly under the Great Green Wall Initiative were developed and approved for Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad and Senegal.

21. To address drivers of deforestation and degradation, it is necessary to develop solutions that integrate forest with the development of viable socio-economic livelihoods. In that perspective, FAO is supporting the development of one full GCF proposal for Congo, to provide technical and financial support to small and medium-scale private initiatives aiming to adopt sustainable agroforestry and forestry practices, as well as three GCF SAP¹⁷-REDD+ proposals in Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia and Liberia, all related to the development of deforestation-free value chains. Furthermore, FAO is providing technical support to countries (Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria) for the development of GEF-funded country projects under the GEF 7 Food Systems, Land Use and Restoration (FOLUR) Impact Program, addressing drivers of deforestation from agriculture. Also, GEF has established a trust fund called the Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) to support implementation of the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF). The initiative will support two countries within a Global Forest CBIT (Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire) in 2020 while Equatorial Guinea and the Democratic Republic of Congo are developing national Forest CBIT proposals.

IV. Points for consideration by the Commission

22. The Commission may wish to invite its members to:

- Raise the level of ambition of climate action (combining adaptation and mitigation) to promote the sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation and peatland drainage, and restore degraded ecosystems.
- Strengthen institutional frameworks and cross-sectoral collaboration at national, transboundary and regional levels to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and enhance the multiple benefits (carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation and

¹⁶ www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification

¹⁷ SAP: Simplified Approval Process of the Green Climate Fund.

sustainable use, resilient livelihoods) generated by sustainable forest management and restoration.

23. The Commission may wish to request that FAO:

- Continues the work initiated for capacity development at national and regional level to strengthen, update, implement and monitor NDCs, and promote cross-sector policies to ensure their compliance.
- Supports countries in the assessment and analysis drivers of deforestation drivers and developing strategies to address them.
- Supports countries in compiling, analysing and disseminating - including through south-south cooperation and regional platforms - forest and landscape related climate change adaptation and resilience practices and case studies for scaling up investment and implementation in the region.
- Supports countries in designing and consolidating REDD+ processes in the region.
- Continues to support countries in their resource mobilization efforts (including GCF and GEF) in support of climate change mitigation, adaptation and building resilience.