

**Statement by the Chairperson of the 23rd Session of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC) to the 26<sup>th</sup> session of Committee on Forestry (COFO)**

- **Excellencies, members of the Diplomatic Corp**
- **Representatives of regional bodies**
- **Representatives of various UN agencies**
- **Colleagues, Heads of Forestry and Wildlife services, who are present in the room and in attendance virtually**
- **Distinguished delegates**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

I take this opportunity, on behalf of the entire membership of the Bureau of the 23rd Session of African Forestry and Wildlife Commission, to thank you for granting us the opportunity to make our few remarks in this COFO session.

Foremost, I would like to thank FAO for its continued support to the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission. I also thank other multilateral and bilateral development partners who continue to provide support for the development of the African forestry and wildlife sectors.

**Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen**, we have just had our commission less than two months ago. At the end of this meeting, the newly elected bureau held one inter-sessional meeting at the end of the Commission. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the Bureau members of 23rd Session and to thank them for their support. I also thank the Bureau for the privilege bestowed on me to represent the AFWC at this 26<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on Forestry where global forestry and related issues are discussed which could also enrich our African forestry and wildlife perspectives.

The theme for our 23rd Session was: **“The role of forests and wildlife in building resilience and recovery from crises and threats”**. This theme is very relevant to the current reality and challenges that we have had in past two years.

The lessons that we have learnt during this time of crisis have indicated that, the forestry and wildlife sectors must be at the heart of actions to build back better for the benefit of Africa's production systems and livelihoods.

The outcome of the 23rd Session came up with number of priorities for us to continue working in the region. These priorities build on previous session (22<sup>nd</sup> session), current realities in Africa and include:

1) First, **Addressing the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation**

- Support policies, strategies, regulations in countries, sub-regional and regional levels for SFM
- Governance improvement & promotion of organized and transparent trade (illicit exploitation of forest and wildlife products)
- Improving of forest-based livelihoods: forest value chains (wood and non – wood forest products, and Sustainable Energy Transition through Wood-based Bioenergy and other biomass energy in Africa )
- Sustainable wildlife management : Human/wildlife/livestock interface, links with food security
- Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Agriculture Sectors

2) Second, **Ecosystem and landscape Restoration**, with continue focus on work around drylands and mountains regions, as well as building on major Pan African led initiatives such as;

- Great Green Wall, AFR100,
- The African Forest and landscape restoration initiative (AFR100), and
- The Agenda on Ecosystem restoration for building Resilience, African Union's Green Recovery Action Plan-2021-2027, among others.

3) Third, Ramping up and increase effort towards implementing **climate change adaptation & mitigation programmes**, in three critical areas: energy transitions, investments in climate-resilient agriculture, and restoration of natural capital (through agriculture, food, and land use practices) and biodiversity.

4) Fourth, **Improving access to data and information for proper planning**, ensure synergies with other productive sectors such as Agriculture and Land, and for effective monitoring and reporting.

5) Fifth, **Promoting forest and wildlife education and profession**, with focus on Youth & Women

Lastly, these priorities will only be met if we are to secure and ensure there is sustainable financing for forestry and wildlife programmes in the region.

I hope that these priorities will inform the agenda for this COFO Session as well as contribute to the next FAO Regional Conference for Africa, and other regional bodies.

**Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,** the programme for work for next two years for AFWC will also include developing programme of work, tracking implementation of, and reporting on the progress these priority areas. We will also continue to work with regional bodies and partners to mobilize resources to ensure our members implement successful these priorities and I would like to call upon support from all partners for Africa in this effort.

To conclude on my remarks, I wish to also thank FAO Regional Office in Africa, which provides secretariat service for our Commission, and we hope to continue to profile African Forestry and Wildlife in other global forestry related consultations during our tenure of office.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

**Chairperson of AFWC**

**Rome, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022**