

# TOWARDS A WEST AFRICA DIALOGUE ON FORESTS

## SYNTHESIS REPORT OF THE FIRST WEST AFRICA FOREST CONSULTATION MEETING

Ouagadougou, 3<sup>rd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> July 2006



Facilitator – The World Conservation Union

**IUCN**

With contributions from:

The Government of Burkina Faso (MEL), FAO, ECOWAS, UEMOA,  
CILSS, CIFOR, ICRAF, UNEP, WWF, FFI and NESDA



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                         |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Acronyms -----                                                                          | 3  |
| Executive summary -----                                                                 | 4  |
| Introduction -----                                                                      | 6  |
| 1 Inaugural session -----                                                               | 6  |
| 1.1 Speech by IUCN -----                                                                | 6  |
| 1.2 Speech by CILSS -----                                                               | 7  |
| 1.3 Speech by UEMOA -----                                                               | 7  |
| 1.4 Speech by ECOWAS -----                                                              | 7  |
| 1.5 Speech by FAO -----                                                                 | 8  |
| 1.6 Opening speech by the Minister -----                                                | 8  |
| 2. Proceedings and Main Decisions -----                                                 | 9  |
| 2.1 Session 1: Status & importance of West Africa's forests -----                       | 9  |
| 2.1.1 Communication by ICRAF: Participation in plant regeneration -----                 | 9  |
| 2.1.2 Communication by CIFOR: Biological & Environmental importance of WA forests-----  | 9  |
| 2.1.3 Communication by UEMOA: Contribution of UEMOA to the dialogue process -----       | 10 |
| 2.1.4 Communication by NEPAD: Information on NEPAD -----                                | 10 |
| 2.1.5 Communication by IUCN: Threats to the sustainable management of WA forests -----  | 10 |
| 2.1.6 Communication by CILSS: Status and problems of forest policies in WA -----        | 11 |
| 2.1.7 Communication by FAO: Forests and woodlands of West Africa -----                  | 11 |
| 2.2 Session 2: Experiences of some regional forest cooperation frameworks -----         | 12 |
| 2.2.1 Cooperation frameworks based on biomes in West Africa -----                       | 13 |
| 2.2.2 Yaounde Summit Process (COMIFAC) -----                                            | 13 |
| 2.2.3 Amazon Cooperation Treaty -----                                                   | 13 |
| 2.2.4 Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) -----                                | 14 |
| 2.2.5 CEFDHAC -----                                                                     | 14 |
| 2.3 Session 3: Definition of a multi stakeholder forest framework -----                 | 14 |
| 2.3.1 Preliminary road map towards the development of the forest dialogue process ----- | 16 |
| 2.3.2 Organisations to involve in the process -----                                     | 16 |
| 2.3.3 Recommendations in plenary -----                                                  | 16 |
| 2.4 Session 4: Finance -----                                                            | 17 |
| 2.4.1 Ecosystem Small Grants -----                                                      | 17 |
| 2.4.2 FAO Financial instruments -----                                                   | 17 |
| 3. General observations & recommendations -----                                         | 18 |
| Annexe 1 : List of participants -----                                                   | 19 |
| Annexe 2 : Programme of the meeting -----                                               | 21 |
| Annexe 3 : Discussion note -----                                                        | 24 |

## ACRONYMS

|          |   |                                                                                      |
|----------|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CEFDHAC* | : | Conference on Humid and Dense Forest Ecosystems of Central Africa                    |
| CILSS*   | : | Permanent Inter-state Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel.                    |
| ECOWAS   | : | Economic Community of West African States                                            |
| CIFOR    | : | Centre for International Forestry Research                                           |
| COMIFAC* | : | Commission on Central Africa's Forests                                               |
| CSO      | : | Civil Society Organisations                                                          |
| FAO      | : | Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations Organisation                |
| GEF      | : | Global Environment Facility                                                          |
| FFI      | : | Fauna and Flora International                                                        |
| FLEG     | : | Forest Law Enforcement and Governance                                                |
| ICRAF    | : | Centre International pour la Recherche en Agroforesterie                             |
| NEPAD    | : | New Partnership for Africa's Development                                             |
| UNEP     | : | United Nations Environmental Programme                                               |
| MEL      | : | Ministry of Environment & Livelihood (Burkina Faso)                                  |
| MRU      | : | Mano River Union                                                                     |
| NESDA    | : | Network for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa                        |
| NBA      | : | Niger Basin Authority                                                                |
| PREDAS*  | : | Regional Programme for the Promotion of Domestic & Alternative Energies in the Sahel |
| UEMOA*   | : | Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa                                           |
| IUCN     | : | World Conservation Union                                                             |
| TroFCCA  | : | Tropical Forests Climate Change Adaptation                                           |
| WWF      | : | World Wide Fund for Nature                                                           |

NB: \* = Acronym is in French.

## SYNTHESIS REPORT: FIRST WEST AFRICA FOREST CONSULTATION MEETING

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Title:** Report of the first consultative meeting on forests in West Africa
- Dates:** 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> July 2006
- Place:** Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- Objective:** Reflect on the set-up of a sub-regional cooperation framework on forests with the goal of increasing the contribution of forests to poverty alleviation in West Africa.
- Participation:** IUCN, FAO, ECOWAS, CILSS, UEMOA, UNEP, FFI, WWF, NESDA, [31 Persons] ICRAF, CIFOR, Ministry of Environment and Livelihood – Burkina Faso. IUCN Netherlands Committee.
- Justification:** West Africa's forests measuring 743,000 km<sup>2</sup> (FAO, 2006) provide a variety of goods and services consisting of amongst others; wood and non wood products for domestic and commercial needs. It is however noteworthy that most of the 250 million inhabitants of the sub-region depend more or less directly on the forest's biodiversity. This forest dependence has been recognised by States through their signature and ratification of international conventions such as the convention on biological diversity. Most countries of the sub-region have also developed forest policies and programmes and promulgated laws which are at various stages of implementation. Approximately 277,570 km<sup>2</sup> of protected areas with forests have so far been gazetted even as numerous initiatives on reforestation are going on for various objectives.
- However, numerous problems persist : Expertise in forest governance needs to be improved, the value of forest products needs to be better appreciated, forest policies better coordinated, results of international forestry meetings better exploited, and the impacts of interventions in forest environments better assessed. Consequently, the contribution of forests to wealth creation and to the economy of the countries of the sub-region remains relatively low, poorly accounted for and generally under-valued. A regional framework for collaboration on forest issues was proposed as a catalytic process towards lasting solutions
- Main observations**
- Effective contribution of forests to poverty alleviation, requires:
- Support in the improvement of forest policies and regulations. There is need to take account of other sectorial policies including economic polices whose objectives may be contradictory to forest policy orientations.
- Take account of the results of forest research and research results of related sectors, including cultural aspects of forest management, in the

development of forest policies.

Support good forest governance with the aim of instituting an attitude of good management, transparency and accountability.

Support institutional capacity development at all levels i.e., training of foresters could be tackled through a sub-regional integration approach.

Support effective management of protected areas and community forests.

Promote strong partnership and networking through a regional dialogue on forests.

Harmonise approaches for settling displaced persons in forest areas in collaboration with the United Nations agencies responsible for this aspect.

**Recommendations :**

It was recommended to:

Establish a West Africa dialogue on forests. The way forward includes amongst others; development and presentation of advocacy documents promoting the process for a broad-based debate at the UEMOA-ECOWAS policy forum for environmental improvement in West Africa scheduled for October 2006.

Request the availability of the Minister of Environment and Livelihood for Burkina Faso to take up the dialogue process in collaboration with his West Africa colleagues i.e., the appropriate Nigerian and Ghanaian Ministers.

Prepare an information note on the initiative to be presented to key partners i.e., the EU conference in Paris scheduled for September 2006.

Produce a one page summary report of the workshop in the form of an information note for broad circulation.

Send official letters transmitting the main workshop report to concerned institutions spelling out the justification and perspectives of the initiative.

Propose a meeting of principal partners and stakeholder representatives for a planning session of the forest dialogue initiative to take place between December 2006 and January 2007.

## INTRODUCTION

A consultative meeting on West Africa forests took place in Ouagadougou – Burkina Faso, on Monday 3rd and Tuesday 4th July 2006. The meeting, organised by The World Conservation Union – IUCN, was attended by representatives of numerous regional integration institutions and international cooperation agencies with an interest in the sustainable management of West Africa's forests for the benefit of all stakeholders. These included the Economic Community of West African States – ECOWAS, the Economic and Monetary Union of West Africa – UEMOA, the Permanent Inter-state Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel – CILSS, the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations Organisation – FAO, the International Institute for Research in Agro-Forestry – ICRAF, the Centre for International Forestry Research – CIFOR, the World Wide Fund for nature – WWF, Fauna and Flora International – FFI, the United Nations Environmental Programme – UNEP and the Network for Environment and Sustainable Development in Africa – NESDA. The complete list of participants is attached as annexe 1 of this report.

The meeting sought to reflect and generate orientations on the type of support to provide to governments and regional organisations to enhance their efforts in making forests contribute more efficiently in alleviating poverty in West Africa. Reflections dwelled more specifically on a broad-based sub-regional framework for collaboration in the management of West Africa's forests.

## 1 INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE MEETING

The opening ceremony, which started at 9 am on Monday 3rd July 2006, was presided by His Excellency Dr. Laurent SEDEGO, Minister for the Environment and Livelihood for Burkina Faso. The session was characterised by interventions from senior officials and representatives from the following organisations and institutions: IUCN, CILSS, FAO, UEMOA and ECOWAS. The presentations made are summarized below. Complete presentations can be consulted in a separate report of annexes and CD Rom.

### 1.1 Speech by IUCN

The IUCN speech was pronounced by Professor Aimé NIANOGO, interim Regional Director for IUCN in West Africa. Professor NIANOGO started by welcoming participants to this first consultative meeting on forests for the West Africa sub-region. He justified the holding of the meeting as mentioned on the discussion paper attached as annexe 3 to this report. He indicated that forest resources remain the response to a variety of needs in the sub-region, including: financial, energy, food, health, raw material for artisan products, micro climate regulation and more.

He revealed that with opportunities offered by new international conventions, (such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change) the tree and forest hold the key to the wealth of the sub-region if well managed and to its poverty if poorly managed. Professor NIANOGO specified that economic and political integration were in progress in West Africa but both take little account of the integrated management of trees and the forest.

A number of problems were mentioned, said to be prevalent due to the absence of a regional collaboration framework on forests in West Africa. He ended up by thanking Dr. Laurent SEDEGO, Minister of the Environment and Livelihood for Burkina Faso who graced the opening ceremony

with his presence, as well as representatives of regional and international institutions for making the effort to be present at the meeting.

## 1.2 Speech by CILSS

Mr. Issa Martin BIKIENGA, Assistant Executive Secretary of CILSS pronounced his speech following Professor NIANOGO. He recalled the multiple services offered by forests to populations and to West African governments where probably more than any where else in the world, forests play a role in the lives of populations on a daily basis. He indicated that this daily role extends to economies of States of the sub-region even if this is not always quantifiable. Mr. BIKIENGA also remarked that despite efforts to develop the forestry sector in West Africa, decline in national forest coverage continued. According to him, the sub-region is fortunate that the cataclysmic scenario which predicted the disappearance of West Africa's forests in general and those of the Sahel in particular never occurred even though the state of the sub-region's forests was still of concern.

While lauding the idea of the West Africa forest dialogue initiative, Mr. BIKIENGA recalled that CILSS and USAID undertook a study with the aim of revisiting hypotheses for forest investment, whose results led to an international workshop in 2002 under the title "*Management of Forests and Trees in West Africa: Evolution and Perspectives.*" One outcome of the workshop was the publication titled, "*Invest in the Forest of Tomorrow: towards a programme of action for revitalising forestry in West Africa*"; a write-up which CILSS proposes to be included among pertinent documents for consultation, meant to advance the current forest dialogue process for West Africa.

Mr. BIKIENGA wished that the current initiative should primarily address issues related to the funding of the forestry sector.

## 1.3 Speech by UEMOA

Mr. Felix E. DANSOU, commissioner responsible for the Rural Development and Environment Department of UEMOA, speaking on the behalf of the President of the UEMOA commission, expressed gratitude for the association of his organisation with this important meeting. He indicated that UEMOA and ECOWAS were currently holding discussions to jointly lead a process for the formulation of a common environmental policy for West Africa.

He wished that the sub-regional framework for planning, consultation and collaboration on forestry issues be the outcome of a larger consultation process.

## 1.4 Speech by ECOWAS

During his speech, Dr. M. O. AFOLABI, Deputy Executive Secretary of ECOWAS responsible for Integration Programmes, thanked the Burkinabé authorities for hosting the current meeting. He then went ahead to mention the efforts of his organisation for the last 30 years in terms of market and monetary integration, development of a regional production base, peace and regional security. He reminded participants that a proposal for an ECOWAS forestry policy was examined during a workshop held in 2005. The overall objective of the said forestry policy shall be to promote and ensure a prosperous forestry sector that favours the use of forests to the benefit of national States. Moreover, the forestry policy shall be integrated into the environmental policy, soon to be

developed and in total synergy with UEMOA's environmental policy as well as the NEPAD environmental initiative.

In conclusion Dr. AFOLABI underscored the importance of the current initiative as it sought to launch a dialogue towards more dynamic and concerted collaboration in the sustainable management of West Africa's forests.

### **1.5 Speech by FAO**

Speaking on behalf of the FAO representative, Mr. Fernando SALINAS, Forestry Expert at the FAO Regional Office for Africa, described and characterised trees and forest resources of West Africa. He provided information on the forest surface area for the sub-region, the various processes impacting on forests as well as the areas lost annually as a result of deforestation and overall degradation. He relayed a rapid chronology of the numerous contacts and forest related initiatives pursued by the FAO part of which was in collaboration with other partners in a bid to support a West Africa forest dialogue.

Mr. SALINAS underscored amongst others, the necessity to harmonise support to States to allow them achieve optimum benefits from their forest related undertakings. He indicated that there was a clear need to fill the existing gap of an absent dialogue on forests in West Africa whether in the humid or dry zones of the sub-region. For this to happen, the major sub-regional organisations of West Africa have a priority to organise themselves in a bid to share roles and responsibilities expected to advance the sub-regional cooperation on forests at the technical, economic and political fronts.

### **1.6 Opening speech by the Minister**

Dr. Laurent SEDEGO, Minister of Environment and Livelihood for Burkina Faso welcomed participants on behalf of the government of Burkina Faso. He indicated that there was insistence on numerous occasions in preceding speeches regarding the importance of coordinated management of forest resources in West Africa.

He aligned himself with the preceding orientation by indicating that political integration should necessarily include harmonisation of natural resources management especially of trans-boundary resources. He went ahead to indicate that the idea to set-up a regional framework for planning, consultation and coordination of forest policies in West Africa was laudable. He however indicated that it was necessary to reflect on the role of such a framework in connection with that of already existing frameworks in the sub-region and propose; efficient, adapted and sustainable options. He proposed an audacious approach with the potential of leading to a Heads of State summit on West Africa's forests.

In his closing remarks, the Minister expressed his conviction that participants at the meeting represented a diversity of institutions and therefore the experience and capacity needed to propose solutions against the challenges faced by West African countries and their people. He thanked IUCN; more specifically it's West Africa Regional Office for the sustainable forest management initiative in West Africa and declared the meeting open.

## 2 PROCEEDINGS AND MAIN DECISIONS OF THE MEETING

The workshop proceeded in plenary and in groups. A total of 5 sessions were recorded, notably:

Session 1 : Status and importance of forests in West Africa ;

Session 2 : Experiences of some frameworks for cooperation on forests ;

Session 3 : Definition of a West Africa multi stakeholder dialogue on forests.

Session 4 : Finance

Session 5 : Observations, general recommendations and closing of the meeting.

### 2.1 Session 1: Status and importance of West Africa's forests.

This session was chaired by Professor Aimé NIANOGO, interim Regional Director of IUCN West Africa. The session recorded six presentations followed by discussions. The complete versions of these presentations are reported in the report of annexes of the current meeting. Summaries of the referred pronouncements are reported below:

#### *2.1.1 Communication by ICRAF: Participation in plant regeneration.*

The presentation<sup>1</sup> revealed that some 534 species of trees were threatened while cash crops on which most of West and Central Africa governments depend i.e., Cocoa, Coffee and Cotton continuously faced price instability. Dr. TCHOUNDJEU remarked that in addition to poverty, overgrazing and loss of biodiversity contribute to environmental degradation. The researcher indicated that criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management had been adopted by many countries but the latter lacked resources to implement the recommendations; that forest governance had improved in some countries as independent monitoring / log tracking (transport and export) was being developed; that most international organizations were more interested by biodiversity conservation than timber exploitation; that ICRAF and partners recommend full involvement of local people in the sustainable management of forests particularly community forests; and that local people, excluded from forest management for the last 40 years cannot carry out sustainable forest management without training hence participatory tree domestication was required for the production of high quality propagates.

In conclusion Dr. TCHOUNDJEU presented the various tree domestication, regeneration and multiplication techniques developed and propagated by ICRAF. He also mentioned targeted market studies undertaken by his institution to allow local people integrate global trade networks that valorise forest products, consequently helping them to increase their financial earnings.

#### *2.1.2 Communication by CIFOR: Biological and environmental importance of West Africa's forests.*

Mr. Daniel TIVEAU<sup>2</sup> defined biological diversity as the diversity of species, genes and ecosystems. He indicated that most developing countries depend on biological diversity for up to 80% of their economic earnings. He went ahead to mention the inefficiency of monitoring natural regeneration programmes in dry areas where selective cutting of trees is having a serious toll on species such as *Detarium microcarpum*. According to CIFOR, a major challenge at this time is to create jobs from

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<sup>1</sup> Presentation made by Dr. Zac TCHOUNDJEU responsible for ICRAF's Humid Zone Programme, Central Africa.

<sup>2</sup> Regional Coordinator of CIFOR for West Africa

biodiversity and in this vein, use low impact exploitation techniques some of which are already being popularised by the forest research organisation.

### *2.1.3 Communication by UEMOA: Contribution by UEMOA to the forest dialogue process.*

Mr. Malick DIALLO<sup>3</sup> introduced his subject by indicating that UEMOA has been part and parcel of discussions and reflections on the forest dialogue process which started in 2001 under the auspices of CILSS, IUCN, UEMOA and ECOWAS. He recalled the objectives assigned to UEMOA, which was created on 10th January 1994 following the devaluation of the CFA Franc. One of the major contributions of UEMOA together with ECOWAS is to develop a common environmental policy for West Africa. Mr. DIALLO also mentioned the existence of a Regional Agricultural Fund with a component on forest management.

In terms of comparative advantages, UEMOA is governed by judicial instruments that warrant States to forego part of their national sovereignty, an aspect which could eventually facilitate the application of decisions related to a sub-regional framework for cooperation on forest issues in West Africa.

### *2.1.4 Communication by NEPAD: Information on NEPAD*

NEPAD was presented<sup>4</sup> as a vision, a strategic framework and programme. It was reported to cover three (3) axes, namely:

1<sup>st</sup> Axis : Establishment of favourable conditions for sustainable development (governance, policy, economics).

2<sup>nd</sup> Axis : Promotion of political reform (8 priority sectors of which environment) and increased investments.

3<sup>rd</sup> Axis : Resource mobilisation (increase of Africa's part in international trade, efficiency in the management of resources of which forests, and increase of public aid and debt reduction.)

According to Mr. ZEBA, the forest, being a shared resource, requires a solid partnership for its efficient management. Its management may not be limited to decision makers and communities. He indicated that the pertinence of initiating a political forest dialogue in a bid to create a cooperation framework cannot be overemphasised.

### *2.1.5 Communication by IUCN: Threats to the sustainable management of forests in West Africa*

The presenter<sup>5</sup> indicated that there has been irrefutable progress. Contrary to certain predictions, there has not been an ecological crisis even after 25 years of relative drought in West Africa. According to him, we are witnessing new investment strategies and approaches. Notwithstanding, forests are undergoing rapid transformation in West Africa where contrary to achieved progress, numerous challenges need to be addressed; insufficient expertise, knowledge gaps, weak contribution of forests to national economies, dwindling human and financial resources, the agenda of international forestry forums meagrely exploited, legislation and control processes weakly

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<sup>3</sup> Director of Environment at UEMOA

<sup>4</sup> Presentation delivered by Mr. Souleymane ZEBA, Adviser, Regional Integration and NEPAD, Office of the Executive Secretary - ECOWAS

<sup>5</sup> Presentation made by Mr. Jean-Marc GARREAU, Regional Programme Coordinator of IUCN – West Africa.

applied, the impacts of major works – (road construction, dams ----) on forest ecosystems poorly assessed, land tenure systems providing little or no security, etc.

Faced with this complex situation, Mr. GARREAU proposed a more integrated forest management approach in a bid to advance all technical aspects and coordinate stakeholders efforts at all levels.

#### *2.1.6 Communication by CILSS: Status, progress and problems related to forest policies in West African countries.*

In his introduction, the presenter<sup>6</sup> indicated that forests in countries of the sub-region belong essentially to States (gazetted and protected estates.) He went ahead to indicate that in pursuance of decentralisation, forests were increasingly observed to be managed by municipal councils and private entities.

The presenter recalled the function of forests: supply of fuel-wood, wood for light services, timber, food security, stabilisation of production systems among others. He indicated that deforestation was becoming rife with increasing population, hence the important role of forest policy coordination.

According to the presenter, the constant modification of forest policies is an indication that much remains to be done despite the successful experiences and progress so far registered in the sub-region. He also indicated that the problem of forest management was related to dwindling national budgets. To resolve these issues, new forest policy approaches should be set-up within the framework of a partnership that links (together) governments, civil society, the private sector and communities. A broad-based capacity enhancement programme is equally necessary to ensure that all categories of actors; understand, accept and play their role in the new forest management arrangements at national level. The presenter concluded by reasserting the commitment of CILSS to be associated with the proposed initiative.

#### *2.1.7 Communication by the FAO: Forests and woodlands of West Africa (surface areas, characteristics and major problems)*

According to the presenter<sup>7</sup>, the forests of West Africa are a priceless patrimony that received regular development support from the FAO and CILSS (amongst others) between 1974 and 1990. He indicated that vegetation is generally sensitive to factors such as temperature, rainfall and human activities. He characterised the forests of the sub-region as of high biodiversity but also experienced high human pressure. The presenter clarified that sustainable forest management and conservation in West Africa required crucial sub-regional cooperation in terms of:

- i. Support in the improvement of policies and the updating of laws and regulations;
- ii. Support in promoting good governance;
- iii. Support to institutional enhancement, including capacity building;
- iv. Support in the management of protected areas, and finally;
- v. Strong partnership among sub-regional organisations with a concern for the forest sector.

Important discussions generated by the above presentations yielded the following pertinent observations:

- The importance of popularising improved vegetative propagation techniques such as air-

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<sup>6</sup> Presentation made by Mr. ELHADJI MAHAMANE Lawali, Regional Co-ordinator of PREDAS – CILSS.

<sup>7</sup> Presentation made by Mr. Fernando SALINAS, Forest Expert at the FAO Regional Office for Africa

layering, budding and grafting was recognised for its role in increasing the productivity of fruit trees including reducing their fruiting age and cycle.

- The need to give forest management responsibility to local people in a more effective manner.
- Importance of taking account of research results in the conception of forest policies including for sub-regional cooperation.
- There was a clear convergence of ideas towards harmonised management of forests.
- The importance of issues related to land-use planning and shared trans-boundary resources was noted. This concerned the transparent and equitable planning of the use of such resources.
- The concept of forest should include the landscape level. The notion of forest landscape allows the objectives of all intervening actors to be taken into account when designing forest management i.e., agriculture, livestock grazing, wild fauna and flora management, etc.
- The importance of traditional and cultural aspects in forest management was recognized. The best exploited and well conserved forests are those under regulation and whose management takes account of considerations inspired by local tradition and culture.
- The need to reinforce the training of foresters (officers, technicians, forest exploiters, communities etc.) by taking account of the sub-regional integration aspect.
- Pertaining to impacts of civil conflicts on forests and on forest management; the orientation proposed was more sensitisation; in a bid to resolve social consequences through approaches such as harmonising procedures for settling displaced people in forest environments in collaboration with United Nations agencies responsible for this aspect.
- UEMOA and ECOWAS (with the technical collaboration of IUCN, FAO, and other institutions present at the Ouagadougou meeting) declared their intention to organise the next meeting to advance the dialogue initiative.

## 2.2 Session 2 : Experiences of some regional forest cooperation frameworks.

This second session was chaired by Mr. Malick DIALLO<sup>8</sup> and registered five presentations. They are relayed below in the order of their pronouncement during the session:

### 2.2.1 Collaboration frameworks based on biomes in West Africa.

The presenter<sup>9</sup> laid emphasis on the evolution of the Niger Basin Authority – NBA, which was created in 1973. From a Commission, it progressed to an executing agency and eventually became an Authority in 1979. Lessons learned included: creation by the Authority of an investment fund – FUNDAP; institution of triennial investment plans, and; the adoption of a financial contribution formula by member states which takes account of the surface area of the basin within their national territories.

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<sup>8</sup> Director of Environment at UEMOA

<sup>9</sup> Presentation made by Mr. Martin NGANJE, Forest Programme Coordinator, IUCN – West Africa

The other biome framework mentioned was the Mano River Union (MRU), which was created in 1973 and regroups Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Lessons learned from the Union included essentially; a)- investments in the training of human resources and the construction of training institutions for personnel from the three countries; b)- the creation of a forestry college with a sub-regional orientation in Liberia; c)- setting-up of a scholarship programme for nationals of the three countries; d)- the institution of a programme for the harmonisation of training curricula; e)- the creation of a marine and naval training institute and finally; f)- the creation of a telecommunication institute to serve all three member countries.

### 2.2.2 Yaoundé Forest Summit (led to the Commission on Central Africa's Forests – COMIFAC)

The Yaoundé Forest Summit (Cameroon, Congo, RDC, Gabon, Central African Republic, and Chad) took place in March 1999, bringing together Heads of State of Central African countries<sup>10</sup>. The Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC) joined the process in 2002. The Summit evolved into a Conference and was eventually institutionalized into a Commission (COMIFAC) in February 2005 with the signature of the Treaty and adhesion of Rwanda, Burundi and Sao Tome & Principe.

The Yaoundé Declaration relates to the conservation of forests, especially at the sub-regional level and with it, the totality of forest issues such as; the harmonisation of national forest policies, forest taxation, participation of local people, involvement of the private sector, promotion of industrialisation, development of forest management tools such as; forest certification, promotion of sustainable financing mechanisms and exchange forums.

The constituting organs of the Yaoundé Summit (COMIFAC) are: the Summit, the Council of Ministers and the Executive Secretariat.

Principal challenges have so far included; a)- the problem of leadership in terms of hosting the headquarters of the initiative and the definition of objective criteria for the distribution of posts; b)- insufficient national financial contributions; c)- relationship between COMIFAC and other partner institutions, d)- tendency to suppress non State actors, non State initiatives and ensure that the State is considered first among all actors, and; e)- considerations for donor preferences.

### 2.2.3 The Amazon Cooperation Treaty

The presenter<sup>11</sup> indicated that he was part of a small team that visited Venezuela and Brazil in October 1998 to gain experience on the operation of the Amazon cooperation framework. He indicated that the Amazon Cooperation Treaty sought to improve the livelihood conditions of the people of its member countries, notably: Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Surinam and Peru by targeting poverty reduction. Its operational organs include; a summit of Heads of State (which has held twice), a council of Ministers of External Relations, and a *pro tempore* secretariat; operated through seven (7) special commissions.

One of the major successes of the treaty is its institution of a number of operational regional networks: a)- network of universities (UNAMAZ), b)- network of agencies responsible for forests and wildlife management, c)- network of protected areas (SURAPA), d)- network of forest research centres, e)- network of NGOs, and f)- network on Indian Affairs.

The presenter ended by indicating that the revolving *pro tempore* secretariat stabilised in 1998 as

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<sup>10</sup> Presentation made by Mr. Cleto NDIKUMAGENGE, Coordinator, Forest Conservation Programme IUCN – Central Africa

<sup>11</sup> Presentation made by Mr. Martin NGANJE, Forest Programme Coordinator, IUCN – West Africa

the Treaty was transformed into the Amazon Cooperation Organisation.

#### *2.2.4 Presentation on forest law enforcement and governance (FLEG)<sup>12</sup>*

The presenter recounted the evolution of forest law enforcement and governance – FLEG. He revealed that the FLEG programme is a broad-based debate on transparency, equity and accountability in the application of forest law and regulations. A number of consultations have held around FLEG in Africa starting with the Ministerial conference of Yaoundé in October 2003 which succeeded in harmonising understanding and catalysed national and sub-regional dialogues and debates on the subject. The case of Tanzania was reported where the FLEG process successfully led to the active involvement of a variety of field level actors in the forest management process.

The presenter indicated that the FLEG programme also seeks to reduce and eventually eliminate illegal forest activities including fiscal fraud in a bid to promote equity in the distribution of benefits from forest resources as a means to reduce poverty among local forest dependent people. Mr. MAGINNIS recalled that if people acknowledge benefits from forests, they will be more willing to ensure its sustainable management. He concluded that the FLEG process constitutes an appropriate entry point for poverty alleviation and sustainable management of forests in West Africa.

#### *2.2.5 Conference on Dense and Humid Forest Ecosystems of Central Africa (CEFDHAC)<sup>13</sup>*

The CEFDHAC initiative was established in 1995 with IUCN as its facilitator. It constitutes a sufficiently broad-based and open forum (governments, civil society, parliament, forest exploiters etc.) for orientation and consultation on forest issues. CEFDHAC permits open debates among State and non State actors in connection with their different interests and orientations as well as generate thinking useful for COMIFAC discussions.

Reforms are underway in 2006 in view of; a)- strategic development and better mastery of the Conference's orientations, b)- develop strategies for further financial support and c)- position itself in connection with COMIFAC.

Discussions resulting from the above presentations led to the following lessons and proposals:

- West Africa constitutes a favourable space for regional cooperation through a forest dialogue considering the presence of a multiplicity of political and economic regional integration organisations.
- There is an advantage in depending on already existing processes such as UEMOA and ECOWAS.
- There is a real need to identify a sustainable funding process. One option would be to involve the Ministers of Economy and Finance in the forest dialogue process through UEMOA.
- The necessity during the meeting to propose the type of dialogue process to be pursued and a critical path towards its institution.

### **2.3 Session 3 : Definition of the multi stakeholder forest dialogue in West Africa.**

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<sup>12</sup> Presentation made by Mr. Stewart MAGINNIS, Head of the IUCN Forest Programme, based in Switzerland

<sup>13</sup> Presentation made by Mr. Cléto NDIKUMAGENGE, Coordinator, Forest Conservation Programme IUCN – Central Africa.

This session was chaired by ELHADJI SENE<sup>14</sup> and involved brainstorming on a questionnaire with the following questions:

**What is the vision and goal of the multi-stakeholder forest dialogue?**

**(Responses):**

- Contribution of forests to poverty alleviation.
- Contribution of forests in national economies and poverty reduction strategies.
- Importance of integrating new actors in the forest dialogue (i.e., network of merchants of non conventional forest products---)
- The need to take account of trans-boundary resources and cross border issues;
- The need for a consultation framework that facilitates good management and the popularisation of information to promote discussions and debates

**How will the framework operate?**

**(Responses):**

- Local, national and sub-regional levels.
- Take account of the informal sector, parliamentarians etc.

After a round-table brainstorming process that allowed participants to propose elements of a vision and the scope of the dialogue process, they split into two groups to reflect on the following themes:

- A. Development of a road-map towards the institution of the forest dialogue process;
- B. Identification of organisations, agencies, actors to engage in the beginning of the dialogue.

The following is a synthesis of the proposals by the two groups retained in plenary:

*2.3.1 Preliminary road map towards the development of forest dialogue process*

- Production of the main outcomes of meeting, end of July 2006.
- Circulate information about the process in countries of the sub-region by the national agencies of FAO, UICN, ECOWAS, UEMOA...): August 2006
- Identification of pertinent technical themes (carbon, fuel-wood, tenure rights ---) and write-up of technical papers under the technical direction of IUCN mid September 2006.
- UEMOA & ECOWAS to organise broad-based exchange oriented sub-regional environmental policy meeting in October 2006. The meeting will constitute an appropriate venue to present the technical papers and debate on the West Africa forest dialogue process.
- Proposal for a meeting of main partners and stakeholder representatives in view of detailed

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<sup>14</sup> Executive Director of HYLEA International (Special consultant affiliated to the FAO.)

planning of the dialogue process: December 2006 – January 2007.

- The importance of identifying actors to be involved in the forest dialogue process early on in its development phase.

### *2.3.2 Organisations, agencies and stakeholders to involve at the beginning of the dialogue development process.*

The following list is not exhaustive:

- Institutions /organisations national, regional and international interested in forests
- Governments
- Local organisations interested in forests
- Civil society
- Private and informal sector interested in forests
- National forestry and wildlife services
- Parliamentarians
- Traditional authorities
- Sensitive groups (women, minorities)
- Research centres
- Universities and other training centres.

### *2.3.3 Recommendations in plenary*

#### Recommendation 1 : Involvement of stakeholders.

- Ensure equilibrium in participation (government /civil society) as well as the use of equitable approaches;
- Engage governments at the very beginning of the process.

#### Recommendation N° 2 : Designation of roles and responsibilities :

- While awaiting an official accord from partner agencies, IUCN is proposed to play the role of facilitator of the totality of the process on the behalf of partners each of which will have a role to play according to their vocation and comparative advantages.
- ECOWAS and UEMOA indicated their traditional role of coordination in a general manner.
- FAO may take responsibility for the technical aspects of the dialogue, IUCN – the dialogue and facilitation processes, UNEP – ecosystem management processes, UNESCO – development of knowledge base, ICRAF and CIFOR – adaptive research, WWF and FFI forest biodiversity conservation etc.

#### Recommendation N° 3 : Designation of focal points.

The facilitator should ensure that focal points are proposed by the various institutions in a bid to effectively engage the dialogue process.

The following persons were proposed as focal points (institutional confirmation awaited)

| Institution                   | Focal point           | Collaborator            |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| CILSS                         | ELHADJI M. Lawali     | Mme BOTONI Edwige       |
| FAO                           | Dr. Jean-Prosper KOYO | Fernando SALINAS        |
| IUCN                          | Mr. Stewart MAGINNIS  | Martin NGANJE           |
| CIFOR                         | Mr. Mathurin ZIDA     |                         |
| ECOWAS                        | Dr. Ibn CHAMBERS      | Salifou TRAORE/ ZEBA S. |
| UEMOA                         | Mr. Malick DIALLO     |                         |
| ICRAF                         | Dr. Zac TCHOUNDJEU    |                         |
| UNEP                          | Mr. Nehemiah ROTICH   |                         |
| WWF                           | Mr. Abraham BAFFOE    |                         |
| FFI                           | Mme. Any'aa VOHIRI    |                         |
| IUCN–Netherlands<br>Committee | Mr. Marc Van der Wal  |                         |
| Ministry – BF                 | Director of Forestry  | Robert SOME             |
| NESDA                         | Mr. Siaka COULIBALY   |                         |

## 2.4 Session n° 4 : Finance.

This session, chaired by Dr. Harold Roy MACAULEY<sup>15</sup>, entertained two presentations, followed by discussions.

### 2.4.1 Ecosystem Small Grants and CSO.

The IUCN Netherlands Committee<sup>16</sup> is a Foundation created in 1983 with the following mission

- Pursue advocacy on public aid for development;
- Manage a programme for small grant subventions such as the GEF small grants programme;
- Set-up five year strategic plans (i.e., 2006 – 2010).

One tool amongst many developed for advocacy and to accomplish the Foundation's mission is a global aid distribution map.

### 2.4.2 FAO Financial instruments

The presenter<sup>17</sup> mentioned the following supportive FAO programmes :

- FAO Technical Cooperation Programme – TCP: Requests for funding may be made by individual countries, a sub-region or a sub-regional organisation.
- National Forest Programme Mechanism : It is a process hosted by the FAO and managed by an administrative committee grouping representatives of main donors and partner organisations. Requests are normally made by countries but could include sub-regional

<sup>15</sup> Regional Coordinator for ICRAF, West and Central Africa.

<sup>16</sup> Presentation made by Mr. Willem FERWEDA, President of the IUCN Netherlands Committee

<sup>17</sup> Presentation made by Mr. Fernando SALINAS, Forest Expert at the FAO Regional Office for Africa.

organisations through partnership with countries.

- FAO / Netherlands partnership (FNPP): Funds from this partnership can be mobilized to support countries or sub-regional organisations.

The following points were noted following discussions and debates on the above presentations:

- Initial financial contributions may essentially support only technical processes.
- The planning session programmed within the period: December 2006 to January 2007 provides an opportunity to discuss funding of the dialogue process in detail.

### 3 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CLOSURE

This session provided the opportunity to record general observations from participants. The following “urgent actions” were noted:

- Development and submission of advocacy documents (critical path and technical notes) promoting the forest dialogue for a larger debate at the UEMOA-ECOWAS environmental policy forum scheduled for October 2006 in Ouagadougou. Questions relating to the operation, management etc., of the forest dialogue process shall be examined in this meeting.
- Produce a one page summary of the workshop outcome in the form of an information note for wide circulation.
- Send official letters transmitting the workshop report to concerned institutions and countries of the sub-region.
- To ensure political support of the process right from the beginning, participants recommend that a report of the meeting be made to the Minister of Environment and Livelihood for Burkina Faso. A request should be made of his availability to take up the dialogue process in collaboration with his West Africa colleagues such as the appropriate Nigerian and Ghanaian Ministers.
- Prepare an information note on the initiative to be presented to certain partners (forums) such as the EU conference in Paris scheduled for September 2006.
- Involve IUCN members in West Africa in the process.

After these observations, the chairman of the session thanked all participants for their rich contributions during the workshop and expressed appreciation to the meeting’s facilitator Mr. Jean Baptiste KAMBOU for the quality of his summary presentations.

To officially close the meeting, Professor Aimé NIANOGO, interim IUCN – BRAO Regional Director took his turn to thank the different chairmen of the various sessions, the organisers of the meeting, the interpreters and the meeting facilitator, indicating that the meeting had permitted significant advancement of the West Africa forest dialogue process.

After these closing remarks, participants embraced one another as a sign of solidarity and for a job well done. They met again at 18.30 at the cocktail party offered by IUCN.

**END**

**ANNEXE 1 : PARTICIPANTS :**

West Africa Forest Consultation Meeting: Ouagadougou 3 and 4 July 2006.

| <b>Names</b>                     | <b>Institution and Function</b>                                                     | <b>Contact address</b>                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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|                                     |                                                                                             |                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| 28. Mr. Cleto NDIKUMAGENGE          | Coordinator, Forest Conservation Programme IUCN – Central Africa                            | Tél. (237) 2215894<br><a href="mailto:cleto.ndekumagenge@iucn.org">cleto.ndekumagenge@iucn.org</a>                     |
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| 30. Mr. Kayorgo AGNAN               | Journalist,<br>L'Observateur                                                                | <a href="mailto:lobs@fasonet.bf">lobs@fasonet.bf</a><br>Tél : 226 50 33 27 05                                          |
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**ANNEXE 2 : PROGRAMME OF THE MEETING**

West Africa Forest Consultation Meeting  
Ouagadougou, 3 and 4 July 2006

**Agenda**

|                                                                                                             | <b>Moderator</b>   | <b>Programme</b>     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Sunday, 2 July</b>                                                                                       |                    | <b>Arrival</b>       |
| 1. Arrival of Representatives                                                                               | Palm B Hôtel       | 14.00 – 20.00        |
| <b>Monday, 3 July</b>                                                                                       |                    | <b>07.15 – 17.30</b> |
| Breakfast                                                                                                   | Palm B Hôtel       | 07.15 – 08.20        |
| Registration                                                                                                | Secretariat        | 08.20 – 08.30        |
| <b>1<sup>st</sup> Session: Welcome and main Speeches [President – IUCN]</b>                                 |                    |                      |
| 1. Welcome speech by IUCN                                                                                   | int. Regional Dir. | 08.30 – 08.40        |
| 2. Speech by CILSS                                                                                          | Asst. Exec. Secr.  | 08.40 – 08.55        |
| 3. Speech by UEMOA                                                                                          | Com. UEMOA         | 08.55 – 09.10        |
| 4. Speech by ECOWAS                                                                                         | Asst. Exec. Secr.  | 09.10 – 09.25        |
| 5. Speech by FAO                                                                                            | Forest Expert.     | 09.25 – 09.40        |
| 6. Opening Speech by Minister                                                                               | Minister           | 09.40 – 10.00        |
| Coffee break                                                                                                | Palm B Hôtel       | 10.00 – 10.20        |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Session: Status &amp; Importance of forests in West Africa [Chairman – ECOWAS]</b>        |                    |                      |
| 7. Formal presentations and review of objectives                                                            | Facilitator        | 10.20 – 10.35        |
| 8. Summary of opening session speeches                                                                      | Facilitator        | 10.35 – 11.45        |
| 9. Status of forest biodiversity in West Africa                                                             | FAO                | 11.45 – 12.00        |
| 10. Biological & environmental importance of WA forests.                                                    | CIFOR              | 12.00 – 12.15        |
| 11. UEMOA's contribution to the forest dialogue process                                                     | UEMOA              | 12.15 – 12.30        |
| Lunch                                                                                                       | Palm B Hôtel       | 12.30 – 13.30        |
| 12. Threats to the sustainable management of forests in WA                                                  | IUCN               | 13.30 – 13.45        |
| 13. Problemes related to policy, conventions & coordination                                                 | CILSS              | 13.45 – 14.00        |
| 14. Sub-regional participation / forest - tree regeneration                                                 | ICRAF              | 14.00 – 14.15        |
| 15. Discussion                                                                                              | Facilitator        | 14.15 – 14.45        |
| <b>3<sup>rd</sup> Session: Experiences of some regional forest cooperation frameworks [Chairman– UEMOA]</b> |                    |                      |
| 1. Collaboration frameworks based on biomes in WA                                                           | IUCN               | 14.45 – 15.00        |
| 2. Examples: 2 forest summit frameworks:<br>Yaoundé forest summit                                           | IUCN               | 15.00 – 15.40        |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                          |               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| • Amazon Cooperation Treaty                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                          |               |
| 3. Examples: 2 forum frameworks on forests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forest Law Enforcement &amp; Governance – FLEG,</li> <li>• Conference on Dense and Humid Forest Ecosystems of Central Africa (CEFDHAC)</li> </ul> | IUCN                     | 15.40 – 16.20 |
| Coffee break                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Palm B Hôtel             | 16.20 – 16.40 |
| Discussion                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Facilitator              | 16.40 – 17.10 |
| - Role & orientations of summit framework in WA<br>- Role & orientations of forum framework in WA                                                                                                                                      | Chairman and Facilitator | 17.10 – 17.30 |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |              |               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Tuesday, 4 July                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |              | 08.30 – 16.00 |
| <b>1<sup>st</sup> Session: Definition of multi-stakeholder forest dialogue for West Africa [Chairman – FAO]</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |              |               |
| 1. Summary of discussions of preceding day                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Facilitator  | 08.30 – 08.40 |
| 2. Framework for multi-stakeholder forest dialogue in WA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What is the goal? (vision and entry point?)</li> <li>- What is the scope and domains of operation? (decision making, capacity building, consultation, conflict resolution, think-tank -----)</li> <li>- How will it operate? (network, thematic / scientific meetings, multidisciplinary, promotion (trade fair) of forest products ---- )</li> <li>- What is the added value? (raise awareness on forest issues at the highest level-----)</li> <li>- What are the major operations (support to on-going initiatives, discussions, support to policy development and politicians ---)</li> <li>- What will be its mandate? (roles)</li> <li>- Where shall it be lodged?</li> <li>- Who will call the forum/summit and at what frequency ?</li> <li>- How will it be structured?</li> <li>- How will it be managed? (mode of management)</li> <li>- How will it be funded?</li> </ul> | Chairman     | 08.40 – 09.40 |
| 3. Setting-up of the multi-stakeholder forest dialogue: Work in 2 groups : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Road map for the set-up of the process.</li> <li>- Inventory of organisations, agencies, stakeholders to be involved from the beginning of the process.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Facilitator  | 09.40 – 10.30 |
| Coffee break                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Palm B Hôtel | 10.30 – 10.50 |
| 4. Presentations in plenary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Chairman     | 10.50 – 11.20 |
| 5. Discussions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Chairman     | 11.20 – 11.40 |

|                                                                                                |              |               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| 6. Definition of roles for the set-up of the multi-stakeholder forest dialogue (see. Road map) | Chairman     | 11.40 – 12.10 |
| 7. Affection of roles (who does what) ?                                                        | Facilitator  | 12.10 – 12.30 |
| Lunch                                                                                          | Palm B Hôtel | 12.30 – 13.30 |
| <b>2<sup>nd</sup> Session: Finance &amp; Closure [President – ICRAF]</b>                       |              |               |
| 1. Ecosystem Small Grants & CSO                                                                | IUCN – NL    | 13.30 – 13.50 |
| 2. Other funding sources                                                                       | FAO          | 13.50 – 14.00 |
| 3. Discussions on finance                                                                      | Chairman     | 14.00 – 14.20 |
| 4. Discussions on next stages / actions                                                        | Chairman     | 14.20 – 14.30 |
| 5. Summary of decisions for the day / meeting                                                  | Chairman     | 14.30 – 14.45 |
| 6. Observations / discussions on main decisions and closure                                    | Chairman     | 14.45 – 15.00 |
| 6. End of meeting cocktail                                                                     |              | 18.30 – 19.45 |

## ANNEXE 3: DISCUSSION PAPER.

### Subject

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Consultation on West Africa's Forests

### Context

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The role of forest ecosystems on the welfare of mankind cannot be underestimated. These have been adequately documented and include amongst others; climate regulation needed for good human and animal health, water supply of reliable quality and quantity, enhanced soil water percolation and erosion control, efficient soil nutrient cycling, plant pollination and dispersal of reproductive plant parts, good soil formation for agrarian systems, wood and non-wood materials needed for domestic purposes, and adequate production of food including protein sources.

As a matter of fact, most of the 250 million inhabitants of West Africa directly or indirectly depend on the dry and moist forest biodiversity for their livelihood. This forest resource dependency has been recognised by governments of the sub-region manifested by their signing and ratifying United Nations' conventions with specifications on forest biodiversity, such as; the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Humid Areas, and the Convention on Desertification. Most countries of the sub-region have also conceived forest policies and programmes and promulgated forest laws which are at various stages of implementation. Approximately 277,570 km<sup>2</sup> of protected areas containing forests have so far been gazetted, while a number of reforestation and afforestation initiatives are currently being pursued for various objectives, as well as the decentralized management of forest resources.

Although there is progress through the above efforts, a major challenge lies in their coordination. Inadequately coordinated policies and attendant practices are known to promote unplanned forest clearance for agriculture, over-grazing of pastures by livestock, large-scale expansion and inconsiderate intensification of cash crops such as coffee and cacao, including forest clearance simply to claim land. Such actions have resulted in the conversion of vast expanses of forest to non-forest, and left much of the remaining forested areas fragmented and degraded. Today, the forest of the entire West Africa region covers no more than 15 – 20 % of its original extent and is considered to be one of the most threatened tropical types on our planet.

With the exception of forests, other West African biomes are already committed to regional integration processes for their sustainable management. The Fresh Water biome is represented by the Niger Basin Authority (NBA) as well as a number of intergovernmental river basin authorities; the savannah and Sahel biome is represented by the "Permanent Inter-state Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel" – CILSS; while for the marine biome, a number of coordinating mechanisms exist including the "Sub-regional Commission on Fisheries" – CSRP. There is a need for regional collaboration on issues concerning dry and moist forests, especially as these have a direct impact on the livelihood of the poor in all countries of the West Africa sub-region.

On the process level, numerous discussions on as many occasions have taken place in the past to set up a regional dialogue, planning and collaboration framework for the sustainable management and restoration of West Africa's humid and dry forests. These discussions have so far remained informal, without concrete actions and way forward, even as the degradation of sub-region's forest resources continues unabated. The boldest initiatives to address the situation have also been poorly coordinated at the regional level with hardly any broad political support.

Examples abound on relatively successful regional coordination mechanisms for the harmonization and implementation of forest policies. The Amazon Cooperation Treaty for countries sharing the Amazon forest of Latin America and the Yaoundé Summit Process for countries of Central Africa's Congo Basin constitute

worthwhile cases. IUCN, through its multi-stakeholder convening capacity, has considerable experience in promoting such processes. For example, the Conservation Union has been supporting the CEFDHAC forest forum for Central African States for over 9 years. Also, sister organisations such as Conservation International, FAO, UEMOA, CILSS, and others, have successfully led occasional forest related forums in West Africa thereby generating sufficient experience and documentation that could contribute in firming and advancing reflections on the current initiative.

This paper seeks to generate support towards a concerted initiative on the West Africa forest. A key output of the initiative could be a strong political commitment through a declaration by Heads of State or governments, to work together to restore West Africa's forest so that it remains a resource capable of sustaining the needs of the poor and constitutes a reservoir of biological diversity yielding essential goods and services in perpetuity.

## Justification

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Poverty is described as the greatest threat to political stability, social cohesion and environmental health on our planet. Nowhere is the truth of this statement more evident than in West Africa, where the wealth of most national governments and the livelihood of their populations depend on the sub-region's degrading natural resources. West Africa consequently registers the most frequent civil conflicts in Africa with at least eight of the sub-region's sixteen countries classified among the poorest on earth. Moreover, the dry and moist forests of the sub-region are classified as the most degraded tropical type on earth. These degrading forests encourage migration to increasingly fragile forestlands thereby provoking their overuse. In turn, the degraded forest further impoverishes the poor who depend on the meagre resource and its habitat for their livelihood. It is this irrational cycle of forest degradation followed by popular movements to other ever fragile forest landscapes more than any thing else, that is responsible for the socio-political conflicts in the West African sub-region. The recent civil conflict in Côte d'Ivoire preceded by others in countries such as Liberia, were generated by amongst others, an ever increasing hunger for natural resources.

The absence of a sub-regional framework on forests induces West African countries to pay less attention to the development of national forest policies *par excellence* as these will constitute the exception rather than the rule. There is a belief that countries with good forest policies will lose market opportunities to those with less rigorous policies as "cut and run" forest exploiters with links to environmentally insensitive markets move unhindered from countries developing comprehensive policies into those that are still to discover the value of their forest resources. Also, the porous frontiers of countries of the sub-region and the transhumant tendency of the sub-region's population, facilitated by regional integration processes such as the ECOWAS have not helped to defray the issue of irrational forest exploitation. As a result, people of one nation exploit the resources of another more or less at will. It is a combination of these factors that is leading to the ever increasing poverty of West African economies whose wealth and health are intricately linked to their existing natural resources in general and to their forest resources in particular.

Generally, forest activities in West Africa, including management and conservation initiatives are pursued on an opportunistic and sporadic fashion, lacking participatory planning at the national and regional levels and without clearly stated objectives to guide performance evaluation. This has often led to a lack of focus and direction. As an example, it is increasingly difficult to find representatives of West African countries at important forest meetings such as the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). Those who attend have no framework through which to share acquired information to non participating countries. Also, most initiatives in the sub-region are undertaken in isolation without the existing benefit of experience gained on similar projects either in the same country or in neighboring nations with usually similar ecological and socioeconomic conditions. As a result,

developed institutional capacity remains inadequate in the face of meager political commitment and support. Experience has revealed that political commitment and joint programming at the regional level has the potential to make effective use of transnational experiences and catalyze active engagement and support by the international community.

## Vision

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The vision entertained by this initiative is of West African forest dependent communities, societies and governments whose condition of livelihood and operation has improved because they understand and engage in the rational and sustainable use of forest biodiversity. They participate in efforts to reduce forest biodiversity loss and promote restoration such that it contributes to their social, cultural and economic wellbeing in particular and to the educational, scientific and cultural well-being of the international community at large.

It should be indicated that the West Africa forest, measuring 743,000 km<sup>2</sup> in 2005 (FAO, 2006) transcends the mangroves and coastal forest ecosystem lining the Gulf of Guinea, upwards, through the Guinea Moist forest ecosystem referred as the West African cocoa belt, into the dry and gallery forests of the Sahel.

## Objective

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The overall objective of this paper is to generate a discussion among sustainable forest management partners in a bid to seek a lasting process expected to foster sustainable management and restoration of the dry and moist forests of West Africa. The overall aim is to reduce poverty among the sub-region's population. It is anticipated that this will be achieved through the promotion of harmonised and participatory forest policies through a forest summit or to another extent through a West Africa forest forum. A forest summit, forest forum or both could be pursued with the objective of laying the foundation for long-term sustainable management of West Africa's moist and dry forests. In the case of a summit, a blue-print for the restoration, sustainable management and conservation of West Africa's forest resources will be sought through a declaration by Heads of State or Heads of Governments. The blue-print is expected to act as a road-map to ascertain that dry and moist forests of the sub-region remain a renewable resource constituting a reservoir of biological diversity that yields essential goods and services in perpetuity.

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