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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

Thirty-second Session

Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, 11-14 April 2022

Improving forest governance in Central Africa: achievements, challenges and lessons learnt

Executive Summary

Extending over 228 million hectares, the Congo Basin forests are the second largest forests in the world after the Amazon Basin. . These forests are rich in biodiversity and provide significant carbon stocks, making them key in contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Moreover, they are important sources of goods and services such as timber and non-timber forest products that are critical to national economies, the livelihoods of local populations and Indigenous Peoples. Despite their importance, the Congo Basin forests are facing several challenges and barriers related to their governance, namely non-compliance with forest laws and standards, illegal logging and poaching, poor benefit sharing of forest revenues; lack of institutional support, poor capacity and funding to ensure sustainable forest management and lack of reliable data to inform sound forest management decisions.

FAO together with other technical and financial partners of the Congo Basin countries has provided significant support to these countries through various projects and programmes aiming at improving forest governance.

The objective of this event is to provide a platform for Members to share experiences and lessons learned on forest governance in Central Africa. The expected outcomes are to get a shared understanding of achievements, challenges and constraints of forest governance in Equatorial Guinea and in Central Africa and to agree on practical and sound solutions and options to improve forest governance.

Matters to be brought to the attention of the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference is invited to:

- recognize the importance and attention needed to improve forest governance in Central Africa in order to unlock the potential of these forests to significantly contribute to national economies and livelihoods of forest-dependent populations as well as to ensure sustainability of forest biodiversity, forest carbon and other forest goods and ecosystem services;
- take note of the progress made and challenges faced by Members on the implementation of sustainable forest management practices and forest governance in the region;
- increase efforts to address the root causes of poor forest governance, including illegal and informal logging and poaching, low forest law enforcement, weak institutional support, low

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

benefit sharing of forest revenues, lack of reliable data to inform sound decisions on forest management and forest governance;

- explore sound solutions and create enabling policies and incentives and provide suggestions and guidance on financial options to support country-level actions to improve forest governance in Central Africa and propose FAO to continue its technical support on improving forest governance based on FAO's comparative advantage.
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Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:

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I. Background

1. The Congo Basin forests are the second largest forests in the world after the Amazon Basin with a forest cover of 228 million hectares, representing 57 percent of the Basin total area. These forests are rich in biodiversity and provide significant carbon stocks, making them key in contributing to both climate change adaptation and mitigation. They are sources of important goods and services such as timber, which contribute significantly to the national economies of Central African countries and non-wood forest products (NWFPs) which are mainly used for local consumption, in traditional medicine and as a source of income generation for local communities.

2. Over the past decades, efforts have been made by Central African countries and their partners to ensure sustainable management of forest and wildlife resources, conservation of biodiversity and improvement of forest carbon stocks, as well as uplifting the living conditions of local communities.

3. FAO together with other technical and financial partners of the Congo Basin countries has provided significant support to Central African countries through several sustainable forest management projects and programmes focusing on biodiversity conservation, forest restoration, forest inventories, community forestry, forest policy, sustainable management of protected areas and wildlife, agroforestry, promotion, and valuation of non-wood forest products, among others.

4. Despite achievements made thus far in Central Africa on sustainable management of forest and wildlife resources, countries are still facing several challenges and constraints related to forest governance, namely issues related to compliance with forest laws and standards, illegal logging and poaching, benefit sharing of forest revenues; low institutional support, weak capacity building programmes and funding to ensure sustainable forest management activities and lack of reliable data to inform sound forest management decisions.

5. Forests in Equatorial Guinea form an important part of livelihoods and the economy with around 80 to 90 percent of the country's population relying on forest ecosystem products and services. In Equatorial Guinea, forest management and timber extraction by communities and smallholders are largely informal, while timber logging is mostly driven by logging companies operating in forest concessions. Despite some efforts made by the country over the years to sustainably manage its forests, Equatorial Guinea still faces some challenges related to lack of trained human resources, illegal and informal logging, weak forest law enforcement, deforestation and forest degradation, weak institutional setting, and lack of conducive environment to improve forest governance.

6. This event organized within the context of the 32nd session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa, aims to map and discuss forest governance issues, challenges and explore suitable solutions to improve forest governance in Central Africa.

II. Objectives

7. Take stock of key achievements on forest governance in Equatorial Guinea and Central Africa;
8. Discuss the challenges and constraints faced in the implementation of activities aimed at improving forest governance; and
9. Explore sound and practical solutions to improve forest governance in the region.

III. Expected outcomes

10. Shared understanding of achievements, challenges and constraints related to forest governance in Equatorial Guinea and Central Africa;
11. Increased awareness and political attention to the importance of improving forest governance; and
12. Agreed vision on practical and sound solutions and options to improve forest governance.

IV. Participants

13. This event is open to all participants of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa. It targets particularly Ministers and senior technical officers responsible for forestry, wildlife, environment, climate change, agriculture and trade as well as technical officers of regional and international organizations involved in forest governance.

V. Venue

14. The event will take place in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea as part of the 32nd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa. It will be organized in hybrid mode with some participants attending in person and others virtually.

Agenda

Timing	Opening and setting the scene
5 minutes	Introduction by Moderator Opening remarks by the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Forest and Environment /Equatorial Guinea
8 minutes	Host country presentation on achievements, challenges and lessons learned on forest and environmental governance in Equatorial Guinea
7 minutes	Main achievements, challenges and lessons learned from the implementation of Central Africa Forest Commission (COMIFAC)'s convergence plan on improving forest governance in Central Africa.
	High Level Panel
20 minutes	Moderated panel discussion
15 minutes	Questions Answers
5 minutes	Wrap up and way forward (by Moderator) Closing remarks by the Government of Equatorial Guinea

