



## **AFRICAN FORESTS FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE: SCALING INNOVATIONS IN AFFORESTATION, RESTORATION, AND SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT**

**FORMAT:** Side event - *Second Africa Climate Summit (ACS2)*

**WHEN:** September 9, 2025

**WHERE:** International Convention Center, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Room AP1

**TIME:** 17:00 -18:30.

**ORGANIZERS:** African Forest Forum (AFF), African Union Commission (AUC), Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

**HOSTED BY:** The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (GoE) and African Union Commission (AUC)

### **1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

Forests in Africa span approximately 624 million hectares (20.6%) of the continent's land area and 15.6% of the world's forest cover (FAO, 2016a). These ecosystems are vital to Africa's environmental stability and economic resilience. They support key sectors such as energy, agriculture, tourism, water, and forestry, while providing livelihoods for millions of people. Additionally, they offer essential ecosystem services, including water and soil protection, biodiversity conservation, and climate regulation.

Yet, Africa's forests face immense pressure. Between 2010 and 2015, the continent lost an estimated 2.8 million hectares of forest annually, the highest deforestation rate globally (FAO, 2016a). This loss is driven by unsustainable land-use practices, expanding agriculture, mining, infrastructure development, weak governance, poor policy enforcement, and political instability. These trends not only threaten forest ecosystems but also broader goals, including national development goals, the African Union's Agenda 2063 and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In response, African countries have increasingly adopted policy instruments such as National Forest sector development strategies, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs), Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) where forests are a major pillar and Landscape restoration strategies. Continental initiatives such as the Sustainable Forest Management Framework, African Union Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, the Great Green Wall Initiatives and the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100) further reflect growing commitment to reversing land degradation and promoting sustainable forest management as a response to worsening climate and biodiversity challenges.

Within these institutional frameworks, afforestation and reforestation interventions are gaining momentum across Africa as scalable and cost-effective solutions for restoring degraded land, enhancing carbon sequestration, and building climate-resilient landscapes and economy. According to FAO (2022), such efforts could sequester 0.9 to 1.5 gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent annually between 2020 and 2050. Similarly, planted forests have pervasive contribution towards transitioning to circular bioeconomic model. For instance, a recent report from FAO demonstrated that the development of wood construction and other green product needs will lead to an increase of 35% of planted forests by 2050.

The First International Conference on Afforestation and Reforestation (ICAR) which was held in July 2024 and hosted by the Republic of Congo and co-organized by AFF was a turning point in increasing the place of afforestation and reforestation in Africa's climate agenda and pushing it to adopt as a Global Decade of Afforestation and Reforestation. This initiative will complement the existing continental Sustainable Forest Management Framework which aims to guide member states in adopting coordinated, science-based, and

inclusive governance approaches for SFM implementation as well as the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) being implemented at scale in drier regions of the continent. Moreover, afforestation and reforestation not only reduce pressure on natural forests but also provide sustainable input to thrive intra-African and global forest product trade.

These are fundamental justifications to initiate special event to foster dialogues within the continent and outside the continent to align stakeholder actions, promote afforestation and sustainable trade in forest commodities, and strengthen climate preparedness. Moreover, although Africa is witnessing momentum to scale up afforestation and reforestation as pillars of climate resilience and sustainable development, implementation at scale largely hindered by limited capacity, institutional fragmentation/discordance, inadequate financing and partnerships. Therefore, there is a need for galvanizing actors at international, regional and subregional levels to increase political, financial and technical support to the initiative.

Against this backdrop, this side event, provides a timely platform to catalyze afforestation and reforestation efforts, showcase African leadership, facilitate cross-country experience sharing, and deliberate on financing and investment in afforestation and sustainable forest management. It will also provide space for stakeholders to share progress, address implementation challenges, and forge strategic partnerships for scaling impactful and inclusive forest restoration initiatives.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

- To showcase Africa-led initiatives on afforestation, reforestation, and SFM as vital strategies for climate resilience and sustainable development.
- To share the outcomes and key messages from the First International Conference on Afforestation and Reforestation
- To highlight lessons and experiences from AU member states and organizations on afforestation, restoration and SFM implementation initiatives.
- To engage policymakers, development partners, and civil society in mobilizing resources and technical support.

## **3. EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- Increased awareness of Africa's leadership and innovations in forest-based climate solutions
- Shared understanding of the AUC SFM Framework and its alignment with national afforestation/reforestation initiatives and actions.
- Strengthened partnerships and political commitment to upscale afforestation and reforestation programmes
- Identification of opportunities for partnership, investment, and capacity building for afforestation.
- Recommendations for integrating afforestation and forest restoration with green growth and climate action strategies.

## **4. PRESENTATION CONTENT**

- Opening remarks by high-level representatives (AUC, AFF, FSC) (3 minutes each)
- Presentations (8 minutes each):
  - *Outcome of the First ICAR- towards UN decade on afforestation and reforestation, emerging opportunities and challenges in Africa - AFF*
  - *Accelerating the implementation of AU's SFM Framework – the Great Green Wall initiatives– AUC.*
  - *Scaling out Forest Stewardship to protect Africa's forests – Zamba Heritage – FSC Africa.*
  - *Green legacy initiatives of Ethiopia to be presented by Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopia*

- *Kenya's 15 billion tree planting initiative: progresses, lessons and way forward*
- *Civil society contribution in mobilizing and implementing FLR*
- *Financing afforestation and restoration in Africa – AFDB*
- Q&A and audience engagement (15 minutes)
- Closing summary and next steps (5 minutes)

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