

# Press Release

## AFF celebrates 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Nairobi

**2 May 2019, Nairobi, Kenya.** The African Forest Forum (AFF) is commemorating a decade of its work on African forestry. On May 22, 2019 a celebration, including a launch of eight training compendiums on various aspects of climate change in forestry, as well as a book titled, *"The State of Forestry in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges"* will take place in Nairobi Kenya. The event is organized by AFF in collaboration with the Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and the Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI).

Since its establishment, the African Forest Forum (AFF) has provided a bridge between science-based knowledge and good policies to support sustainable forest management; effectively working within a science-policy-management framework. As awareness has grown on the role of forests and trees in national economic development, livelihoods and environmental stability, AFF has steadily gained membership and capacity to work on these and other related issues. As a contribution to this effort, AFF has leveraged on the distinct expertise and comparative advantage of its character to influence and facilitate organizations and people to take actions that could better situate forestry in the path of sustainable development of African nations.

The institution, along with its partners, has worked on several key fronts over the past ten years to cultivate shifts in perceptions, priorities, values, capacities and skills to bear on subsequent impact on forestry and related decisions and practices. The interventions leading to this have included convenings on specific issues, advocacy, partnerships and collaborative activities, knowledge brokerage, facilitating capacity and skills development, research and development activities. The goal has been to initiate a process through which local communities are seen and treated as critical stakeholders (participants and beneficiaries), while strategies for harnessing the potential of forest and tree resources to support livelihoods today, some of which employ these interventions, are given as much attention as the sustainable management and wise use of these resources for the benefit of future generations.

Viewed in this context, AFF is providing a platform that facilitates change in the forestry sector. It is this special character that gives the institution the ability to continually adjust to the ever-changing environment that affects forests and trees and their roles, the people who depend on these resources and actors in forestry business.

*"We started this journey on December 06, 2007 when AFF was registered as a not-for-profit NGO in Nairobi Kenya, and with a grant from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in 2008, which helped us, among other things, to set up AFF as a platform that could support African forestry stakeholders to discuss and mobilise resources for improved management and use of their forest and tree resources. A second grant from the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency (SDC), has strengthened AFF as an institution that is gradually being recognized and respected as another key actor on the African forestry scene"* said Prof Godwin Kowero, Executive Secretary-CEO at AFF.

# Background

Africa's current forest cover of 624 million hectares (23% of land area) represents natural capital that supports rural livelihoods, national economies, and has considerable potential in the global economy. The African forest ecosystems are also characterized by high biodiversity and species endemism. Further, the annual value of trade in non-timber forest products is largely unknown since these products are traded informally; however, some estimates put it at over USD 500 million. Africa's forests contribute 21% of total global carbon stock held in forests.

The forests support most rural livelihoods in Africa by providing income generating and employment opportunities. There are very varied estimates of such contribution, but in some cases these forests could support up to more than a third of the household incomes. With respect to provision of ecosystem services, the forests are also important in regulating supplies of water since many river head waters are found in them. On steep slopes, river banks and even on flat terrain, they protect the soil from erosion. They are important sources of fodder for large populations of livestock and wildlife; in fact, most wildlife game parks and wild animal reserves in Africa are found in the forests and woodlands. They also provide the bulk of energy in the countries in which they are occur, in the form of fuelwood for domestic and rural industry uses. About 82% of household energy in Africa is derived from wood, while about 72 million m<sup>3</sup> of wood is removed annually as industrial roundwood. They are an important source of wood for construction of farm structures, building homes and fabrication of furniture for the majority of people in the forest zone/belt.

The African dry forests sandwich the agricultural belt, and are critical to agricultural development, in many ways, including: serving as a reservoir for additional agricultural land, especially when the forests are unprotected; and are increasingly supporting irrigated agriculture because the forests support many river basins, given that most rivers in Africa are found in the forest belt.

When all these benefits are combined, one clearly sees that the forests are critical to the socio-economic development and environmental stability of the continent; in fact they underline human, animal and plant survival on the continent. Africa's forests are therefore set to play a major role in the implementation of Africa's Agenda 2063, the Paris Agreement and the SDGs.

Unfortunately, Africa's forests are under extreme pressure mainly due to agricultural expansion that leads to extensive deforestation, forest and land degradation. These are the primary areas of focus by African forest stakeholders in order to restore the integrity, functionality, as well as resilience of the forests. The African Forest Forum works with many stakeholders on these and other forestry related issues.

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