

PRESS RELEASE

## AFF and NGARA host regional webinars to support African nations on climate action and reporting

**Nairobi. 30 August 2021.** The African Forest Forum (AFF) in collaboration with the Network for Natural Gums and Resins in Africa (NGARA) have officially launched live webinars on “*National responses to the Paris Agreement and promoting gums and resins in Africa for resilience to climate change.*”

The aim of the webinars is to share results obtained by AFF during the last two years from its work on strengthening sustainable management of Africa’s forests and trees outside forests and the role they play in meeting global and national climate change mitigation goals.

AFF’s Executive Secretary-CEO, Prof Godwin Kowero said in a statement, “*AFF has worked hard to provide a bridge between science-based knowledge and strong policies that could support the sustainable management and wise use of these resources for the benefit of present and future generations. It has strengthened the capacity of some public and private forest institutions for sustained development outcomes in the sector and delivered on related issues in the context of climate change. In these webinars participants will be expected to learn from the results of studies conducted by the institution in fifteen (15) African countries on policy and forest governance processes that hold potential to cultivate better responses in the forestry sector to the climate change opportunities and challenges on the continent.*” The countries, he said, are: Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia.



Dr. Ben Chikamai, Executive Secretary of NGARA in his statement, reiterated the contribution of sustainable management of forests in responding to adverse climate change impacts on the continent; and especially in the arid and semi-arid areas where natural gums and resins play an important role in the lives of many people as well as making significant contributions to the incomes of some countries. He affirmed that the studies conducted in collaboration with AFF, would showcase the continent’s existing capacity to strengthen natural gums and resins value chains with the aim of improving rural livelihoods, national incomes and environmental conservation.

*Photo credit: The Network for Natural Gums and Resins in Africa (NGARA)*

More than 200 African stakeholders working on or with interest on climate change, forestry and related issues, are expected to attend the webinars on 30 August to 1 September 2021 (Francophone Africa) and 6-8 September 2021 (Anglophone Africa). Participants will be expected to deliberate and share experiences based on the two main areas that AFF, NGARA and other partners have worked on, namely: (i) Enhancing national forest governance responses to the Paris Agreement; and (ii) Development of natural gums and resins sector for climate resilient communities.

The webinars also incorporate media roundtable discussions. They are made possible with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) through two projects implemented by AFF, namely: *African forests, people and climate change*; and *Strengthening management and use of forest ecosystems for sustainable development in Africa*, respectively. Both projects generate and share knowledge and information through partnerships in ways that provide inputs into policy options and capacity building efforts that could strengthen forest management in a manner that better addresses poverty eradication and environmental protection in Africa.

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# Nine key messages for decision makers

## Improving national governance responses to the Paris Agreement

**1** Good governance within and beyond the forest sector is an imperative to improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent populations as well as in ensuring the sector's contribution to national economies and to provision of environmental services, while simultaneously reducing illegal roundwood harvesting and trade in forest products, forest degradation and deforestation. Many countries in Africa have made commitments to reform their forest sectors. However, studies from fifteen (15) countries from across Africa indicate that forest governance can significantly be improved through clear allocation of decision-making roles and responsibilities. These countries are namely, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia.

**2** Proliferation of global forest-related conventions and agreements over the past two decades, while being very positive in profiling the forestry sector, has on the other hand not witnessed a sufficient accommodation of decisions from them in the sector. Alongside regional and local initiatives to address systemic weaknesses in forest-related governance, more effort needs to be made on building synergies among international forest-related instruments to inform how countries could plan for dedicated policies and measures to implement and achieve their policies and plans and including their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) targets, through climate mitigation efforts and adaptation benefits.

**3** Although the specific forestry areas in NDCs vary from country to country, the cross-cutting thread is the recognition of the inter-relationships between adaptation and mitigation and that some adaptation options such as agriculture, forestry and other land uses can mitigate emissions. While there is considerable knowledge and information that has, and continues, to be generated on issues related to climate change, there is still need for increased sharing of the same at the country and regional levels; this is critical in strengthening understanding of the complex polycentric forest and climate change instruments amongst stakeholders. This is an area where significant funding needs to be directed. Therefore, strengthening capacities of countries for financial resources mobilization is critical.

**4** While strengthening capacity through civic education on rights and responsibilities of different actors to improve forest governance is gradually emerging in the study countries, more efforts need to be directed to these aspects. This is can be through, for example, putting in place appropriate policies and institutional frameworks that recognize the role of the private sector, public-private partnership engagement in the forestry sector; mainstreaming of multilateral environment agreements into national policies, plans and activities; strengthening of nationally determined contributions (NDCs) in plans of work and budget, supporting Africa in articulating its concerns in global processes that have binding decisions on forestry and climate, among others.

**5** There is therefore need for African countries to ensure that **comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems** supplement

**governance innovations** in ways that facilitate them to monitor livelihood and environmental outcomes of these reforms and foster adaptive learning among stakeholders.

### Development of the gums and resins sector

**6** Natural gums and resins are **important sources of income for the rural poor in the eastern and central African regions as well as in the Sahelian countries, in addition to contributing to national incomes through both domestic trade and foreign exchange.**


More specifically, natural gums and resins have considerable potential to generate wealth and uplift the living standards of local communities in the African drylands while contributing to the economies of producer countries. They can be harvested sustainably to generate income for households while simultaneously enabling biodiversity conservation and the maintenance of ecosystem functions; in addition to increasing the economic productivity of the land. However, the value of exports from all these countries is small compared with the resource potential, an aspect that needs to be urgently addressed, if Africa has to be more competitive on the international market in these products, and more so because these countries need considerable resources to improve their poor economies.

**7** The actors in the natural gums and resins value chains are **collectors / producers, merchants, processors, and exporters.** In low-income

**communities, the producers are mainly women (75%), followed by the youth and men.** In some countries, the collectors are organised young men with experience in tapping who offer their services to concessioners in the production areas. Merchants are mainly village traders, agents, and wholesalers whose major role is to bulk, dry, clean and sort raw material (post-harvest handling) for sale to processors and exporters.

Women are key players in post-harvest handling. Merchants, especially wholesalers, are also required to pay various statutory costs (permits and taxes), which vary among countries but impact on their profits, an aspect that needs to be mutually agreed with the national governments in order to ensure that merchants are left with reasonable working capital that can eventually facilitate strengthening the sector.

Exporters/processors undertake the final bulking or final post-harvest handling for export, and in this case they mainly employ women with appropriate skills for final cleaning, sorting, grading, and packaging of final products ready for export markets. Overall, most of natural gums and resins exploited from selected countries are exported in raw form (unprocessed) thereby attracting low prices on the international markets.



**8** With regard to natural gums and resins producing species in target countries, *Senegalia senegal* and *Vachellia seyal* are the main sources of

commercial gum arabic. In Burkina Faso and Niger fifteen and eleven dryland species are involved in gums and resins production respectively, with *Senegalia senegal* gum being often admixed with gums from closely related species such as *S. leata* and *S. dudgeon*. In Kenya, *S. senegal var. kerensis* is exploited for gum arabic (though there exists *V. seyal* resource), and there are five species for resins production. In Tanzania, gum arabic of commerce is an admixture of gums from other species than solely *S. Senegal* and *V. seyal*, an aspect that requires intervention for two reasons: to increase quality and price by not mixing them, and secondly because the country has enormous resources from the true sources of natural gum arabic that hold significant potential to increase incomes at all levels in the value chain as well as promote environmental conservation of the producing areas.

**9** The contribution of natural gums and resins to the economies of the target countries is difficult to evaluate and is also poorly

documented. Most of the actors are in the informal sector making it difficult to capture information on their activities. In Kenya, for example, gums and resins on one hand and gum arabic contributed approximately 0.2% and 0.01% to the GDP respectively, for the period 2005 – 2015. In Burkina Faso, the volume exported has remained below 100 tons on average over a twelve-year period against an estimated potential of more than 6,000 tons. Annual export value is estimated at US\$ 64,000 yearly; however, with a potential to increase up to US\$3.4 million if the natural gums and resins potential is fully exploited. In Niger, about 425 tons of gums and resins were produced in 2018, generating a total income of US\$ 527,540 and US\$ 981,500 for producers and traders/exporters respectively.