



Policy dialogue

on

Strengthening national forest policies and strategies for enhanced forest governance and livelihoods of forest dependent communities, and better contribution to climate action in Africa

*Concept note*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The African Forest Forum (AFF) is a pan-African non-governmental organization with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. It is an association of individuals who share the quest for and commitment to the sustainable management, use and conservation of the forest and tree resources of Africa for the socio- economic wellbeing of its people and for the stability and improvement of its environment. The purpose of AFF is to provide a platform and create an enabling environment for independent and objective analysis, advocacy and advice on relevant policy and technical issues pertaining to achieving sustainable management, use and conservation of Africa's Forest and tree resources as part of efforts to reduce poverty, promote gender equality, and economic and social development. Through all its programmes and activities, AFF seeks to promote the empowerment of all marginalized groups, particularly women, who continue to be vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and whose representation, priorities and needs are rarely adequately addressed in the forestry sector.

In this regard, AFF is implementing a project entitled "African Forests, People and Climate Change" that is on its third phase and guided by the following four specific objectives, which are to: i) strengthen capacity of African forestry stakeholders in adopting best practices that integrate both adaptation and mitigation options in response to the impacts of climate change and variability to biophysical and social systems in different landscapes; (ii) enhance national forest governance by strengthening the capacity of African stakeholders to respond to the Paris Agreement and related global climate change policies and initiatives related to forestry; (iii) promote entrepreneurship opportunities and technologically efficient means for value addition in African forestry, including those related to climate change that enhance livelihoods, national incomes and employment; and (iv) strengthen AFF's institutional capacity in creation and sharing of relevant forest and tree-based knowledge and information for improved decision making. Through these objectives, the project seeks to generate and share knowledge and information through partnerships in ways that will provide inputs into policy options and capacity building efforts for improved forest management that will better address climate change impacts as well as contribute to poverty alleviation and environmental protection in Africa.

To pursue these objectives the project facilitated studies that analyzed national plans, policies, and strategies on forests and tree-based climate change resilience, implementation of REDD+, production and trade in gums and resins, and implementation of the Paris Agreement and decisions from related forestry and climate change discourses. These studies generated knowledge and recommendations to guide improvement of forest governance processes for enhancing forest management that responds better to adverse impacts of climate change while at the same time building the resilience of forest dependent communities, including women and youth in climate vulnerable areas, who depend on dryland resources and commodities for their livelihoods, incomes and wellbeing.

The need for improving forest governance in order to better harness forestry contribution to climate solutions is also emphasized in the Art. 5 (2) of the Paris Agreement stipulating that "*Parties are encouraged to take action to implement and support.....alternative policy*

*approaches, such as joint mitigation and adaptation approaches for the integral and sustainable management of forests”.*

Some of the key findings and policy recommendations from these studies include:

A) For forest and tree-based resilience to climate change and governance response to Paris Agreement:

- African countries have deliberately put in place policies and institutions to better capture forest and tree-based mitigation and adaptation options in their national responses to climate change. However, there is a need to enhance the existing potentials by making these forest and tree-based climate responses more explicit in strategies, programs and projects;
- 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 at the national level, to inform how countries could plan for dedicated policies and measures to implement and achieve their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) targets through climate mitigation efforts and adaptation benefits;
- African countries are encouraged to consider revising existing plans, policies, strategies and create relevant instruments that can foster forest and tree-based interventions and enhance climate actions by integrating both mitigation and adaptation in response to climate change;
- Although the inter-relationships between adaptation and mitigation is well recognized in the NDCs for many African countries, there is need for increased knowledge and sharing of information at the country and regional levels as a critical component for enhanced understanding of the complex polycentric forest and climate change instruments amongst stakeholders;
- Forest-related policies and institutional frameworks need to recognize the role of the private sector, public-private partnership engagement in the forestry sector; mainstream multilateral environmental agreements into national plans and programme; strengthen Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in annual plans of work and budget; enhance global decisions on forestry and climate, among others; this will contribute to strengthening capacity through civic education on rights and responsibilities of different actors to improve forest governance.

B) For promotion of value chains of gums and resins and other NTFPs to enhance resilience to climate change and wellbeing of forest dependent communities

- There is need for creating awareness among policy makers on the contribution of gums and resins and other Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) to the national economies based on properly documented data on the statistics of production and trade to enable commodities to be captured in the GDPs;
- The value chains of gums and resins and other NTFP require streamlining to ensure proper benefit sharing across the actors’ categories and appropriate institutional arrangements that can favour lobby for an enabling environment.
- Overall, gums and resins and other high value NTFPs are poorly processed in African countries, therefore poorly competitive in international markets. Actors’ empowerment could enhance gums and resins contribution to livelihoods and national economy, provided aspects of taxation (levies and various government taxes) are well structured

and determined in participatory manner to avoid aversion and/or discourage investment in the sector;

Overall, it was suggested that national forestry governance system need to ensure that comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems supplement governance innovations to monitor livelihood and environmental outcomes of policy reforms and foster adaptive learning among concerned stakeholders.

It is in this context that AFF in its annual work plan of activities for 2022, is facilitating implementation of national policy dialogues in **Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Niger, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania** with the aim to address the above and other findings from the studies and possibly identify ways through which existing national forest policies and strategies could accommodate them. This holds good potential to contribute to the development and implementation of evidence-informed forest instruments that could enhance forest governance, national contribution to climate action and livelihoods of forest dependent communities.

Policy dialogues have been described generally as a form of consensus building, a process of communicating and negotiating priorities and values among different stakeholders to agree on a common programme of action. Such dialogues facilitate (i) stakeholders' self-assessment of existing forestry instruments to evaluate their potential for achieving national forest goals and complying to country's obligations to internationally agreed decisions, and in this case focusing on climate change related MEAs and, (ii) participatory reflection and design of the appropriate responses and how to implement them.

## **2. EXPECTED RESULTS AND OUTPUTS**

The following outputs are expected to be achieved at the end of the policy dialogue:

- (i) Policy makers in African forestry sensitized on the potential contribution of gums and resins to national economies, community's livelihood and resilience to climate change and constraints in fully exploring this potential;
- (ii) Policy makers in African forestry better enlightened on NDCs, SDGs, REDD+, IAF and other relevant MEAs and regional initiatives relevant to forestry;
- (iii) Key issues captured from the policy dialogue based on (i) and (ii) and other discussions;
- (iv) Relevant national instruments assessed as to their capacity to accommodate identified issues in (iii)
- (v) Additional measures identified to address some key policy dialogues issues that could not be accommodated through existing national forestry instruments

## **3. VENUE, DURATION AND PARTICIPANTS**

The national policy dialogue will convene 10-15 participants mainly policymakers from the departments of forestry, environment, planning and finance as well as managers from non-governmental organizations, forestry associations, private sector, research, and academia. The exact venue in targeted countries will be identified with the selected facilitator.