

Opening remarks by Executive Secretary- Prof Godwin Kowero

for regional training workshop

on

Forest planning and forest management in different forest types

in Eastern and Southern Africa

24 - 28 July 2023

Arusha, Tanzania

The Guest of Honour: The Deputy Vice Chancellor at The Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology, Prof Suzana Augustino, *doubling as* The Chair of The Members' Forum for the African Forest Forum, *and* Member of Governing Council of AFF

Mr. Dismas Mwikila, Principal Environment and Natural Resources Officer, East African Community

Heads and representatives of various institutions,

The media

Workshop delegates, resource persons and AFF staff

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning, Habari za asubuhi, bom dia;

It is an immense pleasure to see all of you here. Allow me to welcome you all to this workshop that has been organized by staff from the African Forest Forum in collaboration with the Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology, and the resource persons.

It is essentially a technical meeting of practitioners in forestry to examine how we can collectively improve the forest planning processes in our countries and regions, as well as eventually cultivate best practices in forest management. It is in this way that the forest sector can contribute more effectively to making available forest products and services to our people.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank Prof. Suzana Augustino, the Deputy Vice Chancellor at The Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology, our host institution, for various contributions made towards organizing this event; and also, for accepting to grace this opening ceremony as our Chief Guest. This is the first event that AFF and The Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology are organizing together; we firmly believe there will be many more in future.

I would also wish to register our profound appreciation and thanks to the management and staff AFF, resources persons, and related Tanzanian Government ministries and agencies, for all efforts that have gone into the organization of this event. Everything has gone extremely well.

Many thanks go to you all delegates for your interest in this event and travelling to Arusha to take part in this training. I also wish to thank the more than 150 people participating online.

Allow me to say a few things on forest planning.

Forests, whether natural or planted, take time, usually a long time before they reach the level of maturity to be harvested for the intended products. During such a period many things can happen that could influence the forest condition, and therefore the intended products users want to make from the harvested trees. Such happenings could include wildfires, droughts, floods, changes in consumer preferences, policies and regulations that could impinge on the forest practice, entry into the sector of new actors and products, among others. The necessity to address such uncertainties and risks makes forest planning an extremely critical activity forest owners and managers should undertake. Forest plans will therefore address a wide range of prevailing and anticipated economic, environmental, and social-cultural issues that could affect the forests.

Globally, there are many policies, multilateral environmental agreements, and initiatives (including the SDGs, various forestry related conventions, global forest goals, forest products standards) that our countries identify with that have implications on the way we develop, manage, and use forest resources. At the pan-African level there are similar agreements and initiatives like Agenda 2063,

AFR100, and SFM Framework for Africa. At sub-regional level there are several forest policies and strategies implemented by the regional economic communities. At national level we have forest policies and strategies, macroeconomic policies, and practices (including cash budgets), and others. The questions are:

- To what extent have these informed or continue to inform the forest planning process in our countries?**
- And how have they influenced the way our countries stayed on course in their forest plans?**
- And how have they affected the delivery of forest ecosystem goods and services, and what are their other implications to the society?**

Over the years the performance of the forestry sector has not been up to expectations. Several initiatives have been and continue to be proffered, especially in terms of improving policies, governance, and regulatory frameworks; and with mixed results of success. But all these have been and continue to be implemented on basis of existing forest plans for the sector and with the assumption that such plans are adequate. Further, not adequate attention has placed on forest management interventions in the context of internal and external environments to the sector. The questions are:

- Have all these measures to refurbish the forestry sector been implemented in forests whose plans are flawed or not flexible enough to accommodate the dynamic environment we are living in?**
- Could this explain why we continue to experience mixed results from all these efforts, with many of these results not satisfactory enough?**

Such thinking has motivated AFF to evaluate the basis of our operations/interventions (in other words, forest management practices) in various forest types: that is how we make interventions in our forests. We therefore seek to understand:

- How forest management interventions are undertaken in various forest types.**
- How to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of such interventions.**

This training workshop will shed light on these issues, especially from the work you will do in groups, which will inform how different countries are managing various aspects of the planning process.

In future, AFF and partners have the task to rise above developing effective forest plans at national level, to developing forest plans that could guide sub-regional and regional forestry policies and strategies; plans that could enhance the pace of regional integration in Africa around forestry.

I wish all of you very good deliberations on this particularly important forestry area that holds considerable potential to increase effectiveness and efficiency with which the forestry sector operates.

I thank you for your attention.

23/07/2023