



FOREST DAY SUMMARY REPORT

FOREST DAY CENTRAL AFRICA

Shaping the Debate on Forests and Climate Change in Central Africa

24 April 2008, Palais des Congrès, Yaounde, Cameroon.

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), organized “Forest Day Central Africa” on 24 April 2008 in Yaounde, Cameroon. This event was a follow up of Forest Day Bali, organized by CIFOR in parallel with the 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP13-UNFCCC).

The theme for Forest Day Central Africa was “Shaping the Debate on Forests and Climate Change in Central Africa”. The aim was to raise awareness and share knowledge and experiences on Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) in Central Africa. This was achieved by bringing together researchers, NGOs, the private sector, forest communities and government officials to engage in dialogue about the issue.

The first of its kind in Central Africa, Forest Day was attended by more than 150 people, including scientists, policymakers and representatives from various intergovernmental and non –governmental organizations. Results from a survey show that participants highly appreciated the event: of the 44 survey forms that were filled in, 21 people rated Forest Day as very good, 20 as good.

In addition to opening and closing plenaries, the event comprised of four parallel sessions and a Forest Café. The themes of the four parallel sessions were: REDD and other forest management approaches in Central Africa; Methods, difficulties and results of forestry dynamics; the impact of REDD on rural poverty; REDD, markets and governance. For more information on the parallel sessions, see:

http://www.cifor.cgiar.org/Regions/CAfrica/Events/FDCentralAfrica/cameroon_program.htm

REDD IN CENTRAL AFRICA

Since deforestation and land degradation in tropical countries account for almost a quarter of total greenhouse gas emissions, experts have urged to include measures against deforestation and forest degradation in a post-Kyoto Protocol regime. Although excluded from the first commitment of the Kyoto Protocol, the idea has received political support since 2005 from a group of tropical countries united in the ‘Coalition of Rainforest Nations’.

The political support for the consideration of REDD, also referred to as “avoided deforestation”, has been growing not only for its climate benefits, but also for its potential social and ecological co-benefits including poverty reduction and biodiversity conservation. The meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC that took place in Bali in December 2007 resulted in a commitment to investigate how avoided deforestation can be included in a post -Kyoto regime.

The idea consists of providing financial compensations for the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Developed countries would pay developing countries to preserve their forests via carbon markets and/or public funds.

The Congo Basin in Central Africa is the second largest tropical forest area in the world after the Amazon Basin. Its 2 million km² of humid tropical forests store between 25-30 billion tonnes of carbon.

The Commission on Central African Forests (COMIFAC) has submitted a REDD proposal on behalf of the Congo Basin countries. Since forest degradation is a bigger threat in the Congo

Basin than deforestation, Central African countries are urging that compensation for avoided forest degradation be on an equal footing with avoided deforestation.

COMIFAC proposes to finance compensations by a mix of public funding and markets. The regional forest body proposes two further funds: one to finance capacity building and pilot activities, and another to reward past efforts to keep deforestation low.

OPENING CEREMONY

In her opening remarks, Cyrie Sendashonga, CIFOR's Central Africa Regional Coordinator, said that forests play a big role in climate change discussions, because they are a source of emissions as well as a strategy for mitigation and adaptation. She said that economic development and population growth might increase deforestation in Central Africa. She explained that REDD, while presenting an opportunity to protect biodiversity, improve living conditions of forest –dependent communities and mitigate climate change, poses risks in a context of bad governance and an inadequate institutional framework.



Cyrie Sendashonga, Regional Coordinator, CIFOR



Denis Koulagna, Secretary General, MINFOF

Denis Koulagna, Secretary General of the Cameroonian Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) delivered the opening speech on behalf of Dr. Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, Minister of Forests and Wildlife of Cameroon. He noted that the forestry sector in Cameroon has seen some major reforms in the last ten years, notably in the areas of sustainable forest management and the contribution of forests and wildlife to economic development and poverty reduction. He stressed that Cameroon is taking firm measures to put a halt to desertification. In this light, Mr. Koulagna mentioned a national reforestation program and negotiations with the European Union about a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), which promotes legal timber production.

Keynote Addresses

Joseph Amougou, Cameroon's Focal Point for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), introduced the issue of forests and climate change in the context of the Congo Basin. He explained that the Congo Basin forest extend from the Atlantic coast in the west to the mountains of the Albert Rift in the east. It shelters an enormous diversity of plants and animals, covering an area of 2 million km² that encompasses Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The DRC alone harbors 50% of the forest cover. Mr. Amougou said that climate change is a reality for the Congo Basin and that developing countries should make a collaborative effort to halt deforestation.

Christophe Besacier, French Cooperation, gave a short history of negotiations around avoided deforestation in relation to climate change. He explained that negotiators are unanimous on the need for fast actions, that all countries are not on the same level vis-à-vis the problems of deforestation, and that knowledge and methodologies need to be thorough. Other questions that Mr. Besacier addressed included: How do we define a reference

scenario? Do we include “degradation” or just deforestation? Should action be carried out on a national or project level? Should the reduction of emissions be carried out in an open market or should we favor the installation of stabilization funds, which could reward management efforts (eg. forest stabilization or reforestation)?

PARALLEL SESSIONS

1. REDD in Central Africa and other forest management approaches

The session was moderated by Thierry Liabastre, French Cooperation.

Hortense Ngono, Cameroon’s National Forest Agency, presented the impact of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) on cacao plantations in Cameroon. She noted that the MDP has created opportunities for the revival of cacao culture in the wet savannas of Cameroon.

Claus Falkenberg, German Technical Cooperation GTZ, provided an overview of a REDD pilot project that GTZ is carrying out in Cameroon. He pointed out the highly speculative character of the REDD debate; the uncertainty about the result of the negotiations; rising prices of agricultural products; the specific context of the Congo Basin; and the widespread deforestation and degradation in Brazil and Southeast Asia, compared to the Congo Basin.

Martin Tchamba, WWF, outlined the WWF approach to REDD in the Congo Basin. He said that WWF will assist the Congo Basin countries to facilitate the development of a regional program for the management of REDD funds and will examine possibilities to set up projects and work together with donors and partners. One of the participants asked how WWF could start projects when there remain so many uncertainties. The response was that WWF wanted to be ready when the negotiations are done, and especially since private investors are already coming in.

Alain Billand, Center for International Cooperation in Agronomic Research for Development (CIRAD), discussed forest degradation and carbon equation in Central Africa. He said that several factors contribute to the loss of carbon: cutting of trees; damage of demolition; dirt roads; areas of deposit and storage; and the opening of campements. He said there is a huge lack of data to estimate losses. Management plans can have a positive effect, but we should relativize their importance for climate change.



Participants during the parallel session on REDD in Central Africa: which interactions with other forest management approaches?

In the ensuing discussion, participants agreed that CDM and REDD can stimulate a new direction for the sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests. Mechanisms are being tested, but in the meantime, all stakeholders need to be prepared and informed for when funds start coming. Stakeholders need to capitalize on current data, and seek to improve this data as much as possible.

2. Forestry dynamics: methods, difficulties and results

The session was moderated by Louis Zapfack, University of Yaounde I.

Sylvie Gourlet- Fleury, CIRAD, said that to maintain forests, it is necessary to give them an economic value. For this it would be necessary to quantify the impact of the exploitation on forest populations. She cited an example of a research method applied in 1982 in Mbai-ki, RCA (Central African Republic), which allowed such quantification - for example to know how long it takes to regain the volume and carbon stock of exploited species. Ms Gourlet- Fleury recommended increasing this kind of research in the sub-region.

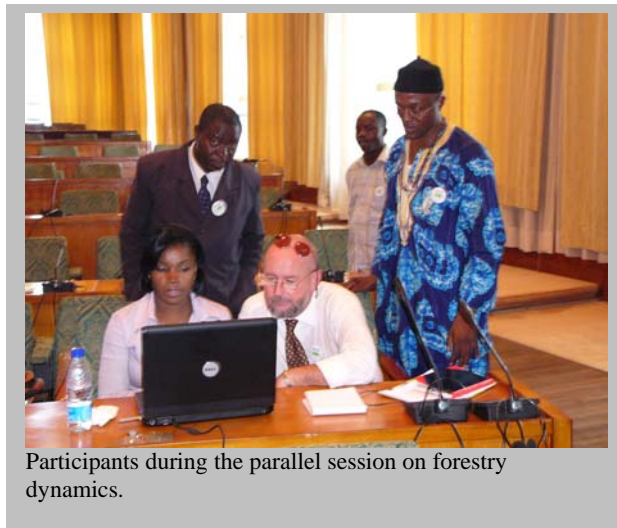
Valentina Robiglio, IITA, explained why agriculture is one of the immediate causes of deforestation and thus plays a key role in the REDD architecture. She said that village agriculture is mainly based on the slash and burn system, which means conversion of forest into agriculture, successive transitions from agriculture into secondary forest and the fallow like a carbon sink. She went on to explain how to use monitoring tools – like GPS – to understand and evaluate these dynamics, but emphasized that challenges exist in terms of space-time information resolution.

Vincent Beligné, French Cooperation, spoke on the challenges for reforestation in Cameroon. He started with the questions of why to plant trees? To restore vegetation? To produce wood? To store carbon? To produce energy? He said that the estimated demand for wood in Cameroon is estimated to be around 4,5 million m³ for sawn wood and 15 million m³ for service and firewood. Mr. Beligné said that only reforestation will make it possible to meet increasing needs. He went on to discuss the questions of where and which species? He said that a crucial question is the property rights of the planted tree, even more so that the property of the ground in which it grows.

Gideon Shu, Global Forest Watch, talked about deforestation and forest degradation in Central Africa. He explained that these two parameters don't allow for the realisation of map on landscape level.

The discussion that followed focused on three main questions:

1. What are the principal scientific gaps to estimate the carbon stored in forests?
2. Which scales (tree, class of regeneration, population, landscape) should be adopted for such scientific analyses?
3. How to progress from scientific data collection to influencing decision making?



Participants during the parallel session on forestry dynamics.

3. The impact of REDD on rural poverty

The session was moderated by René Oyono, CIFOR

Presentations were made by Raphael Hanmbock, African Network for Climate Change (ANCC), William Mala (CIFOR), Patrice Bigombe Logo (CERAD), and Joseph Tsana (IITA, STCP).

Issues that emerged from the presentations included the weak rights to forest land of local communities; the marginalization of these communities in accessing revenues and benefits from conservation; conflicts that could arise as a result of unequal REDD benefits; too much focus on markets and not enough of poverty reduction; no representation of forest communities and indigenous peoples in the negotiations and discussions on REDD; and the weak influence of national stakeholders on the price of carbon.

The discussion focused on three questions:

1. Ensuring that CDM/REDD schemes take into account local communities livelihoods;
2. Implication of CDM/REDD schemes for peri-urban populations;
3. CDM/REDD and MDG.

Participants stressed the need for information dissemination on issues such as CDM and REDD; capacity building of local stakeholders (individual and communities) to put in place CDM/REDD mechanisms; allowing indigenous tree species in community plantations; developing eco-tourism concessions; adapting CDM/REDD to different forms of forest ownership; guaranteeing forest ownership rights for local communities; revising/clarifying current tenure regimes; Establishing coherence and consistency between domestic negotiations and international negotiations; giving a voice to local communities in national and international REDD negotiations; increasing the influence of civil society organisations in the REDD debate; supporting small scale producers by giving them access to credit and helping them with agricultural diversification; assisting with developing environmental services in community forests; and paying conservation costs to communities living on the borders of protected areas.

4. REDD, markets and governance

The session was moderated by Guillaume Lescuyer, CIFOR/CIRAD.

Cary-Anne Cadman, World Bank, informed participants about the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). She said that the FCPF is a new initiative by the World Bank to provide capacity building and positive incentives for countries to reduce their deforestation and degradation rates. She explained that Participants during the parallel session on forestry dynamics. 5 Forest Day Summary Report, May 2008 the Facility will set the stage for a future, large-scale system of positive incentives for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation. The FCPF was officially launched at COP13-UNFCCC in Bali, Indonesia.

Christophe Besacier, French Cooperation, gave an overview of the different ways to financially support carbon sequestration. He showed two complementary methods: funds versus markets, binding versus voluntary mechanisms. He said that the more binding a mechanism, the higher the price gets, as shown in the European market of carbon credits. He noted that this debate is crucial in the future negotiations on the REDD and its potential applications in Africa.

Dennis Sonwa, IITA/ASB, discussed opportunities for avoided deforestation in the humid forest landscape of Central Africa. Building on previous research in the ASB benchmark of the broader Congo Basin, he showed analyses of the trade-offs between carbon and economic returns in forest landscape mosaic. He explained that the study is based on land use changes over time, carbon stock per land uses and Net Present Value of those land uses.

Peter Minang, ICRAF/ASB, said that effective institutional arrangements constitute an important condition for the successful implementation of any post -2012 REDD/forestry mechanism. He examined the current REDD options with regards to specific roles and capacities required for implementation. He also explored possibilities for developing a viable institutional infrastructure for REDD in Cameroon.

In the general discussion that followed, participants agreed that:

1. Grassroots leaders, civil society and local stakeholders should also benefit from capacity building, in order to increase local involvement and interest. Participants stressed that capacity strengthening should start now so as to be ready in 2012
2. Governance is a major issue in implementing forest projects related to climate change and climate change initiatives should be integrated into diversified projects that promote development.
3. Flexible mechanisms, like voluntary markets, should be promoted because they are easier and cheaper. On the other hand, they are less secure as well. The State must provide the framework, for instance by setting up a control mechanism.

Forest Café

Forest Café was moderated by Anne Nsang, United Nations Information Center (UNIC).

Forest Café was organized as a forum for non-experts to discuss issues of forests and climate change. In an informal setting, it offered an opportunity to break down concepts like adaptation, mitigation and carbon markets and make it understandable for everyone.

In his opening presentation, Prof. Maurice Tsalefack from the University of Yaounde I explained very briefly what climate change is all about: *"Image you are in bed, covered with a sheet. Your body produces heat, so at a certain moment, you throw off the cover since it's getting too warm. Climate change is like a sheet around the earth, but one that we can't throw off, so it's getting warmer and warmer on earth."*

This brief presentation was followed by table discussions. Some issues that arose at several tables included: trees in cities, reforestation, sharing of REDD benefits and the stake of local people.

CLOSING CEREMONY

In addressing the closing plenary, Honorable Jean-Jacques Zam, MP, President of the Network of Parliamentarians for the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems (REPAR), called on all stakeholders to take action on sustainable forest management and climate change. He noted that on the basis of some explanations, we tend to be positive about the REDD mechanism. But he wondered whether it will be better than other ambitious and generous initiatives that were introduced earlier. He also called for payments for environmental services. He concluded with four action points for the government on REDD: ensure forest populations are represented at the negotiation table so their views are taken into account and they feel ownership of the mechanism; clarify land rights; put in place an interministerial structure responsible for international negotiations and redistributing funds with good governance; put in place a REDD evaluation and control mechanism.

Martin Tadoum, COMIFAC, said that degradation of forests should be on the same level as deforestation in REDD compensations. He also called for financing of the current carbon stocks in the Congo Basin. He called for more pilot projects and financing.

Samuel Makon, GTZ and Facilitateur-Délégué of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), said that the economic value of forests should not be overlooked and that we should study all possibilities in which forests can contribute to poverty alleviation. He noted that in this light, REDD is an interesting possibility but that many challenges exist. He highlighted

the need for the Congo Basin to defend its position and that this position should be defended again during the upcoming COP 14-UNFCCC in Poland.

In her closing remarks, Cyrie Sendashonga thanked all the participants for the very rich discussions that took place throughout the day in all the parallel sessions and in the Forest Café. She said that she and her colleagues from CIFOR had listened very attentively to all the recommendations that were made and will try to ensure that, to the extent possible, those that fit with CIFOR's activities are followed up in the framework of CIFOR's new strategy for 2008-2018. She briefly highlighted the six major research domains that comprise this new strategy and noted that the first domain – “to maintain and expand forest-based carbon sinks)” - specifically puts a focus on REDD.

In light of this interest, Cyrie suggested that Forest Day becomes an annual event under the leadership and patronage of COMIFAC. She asked Martin Tadoum, representative of COMIFAC, to convey the message to the Executive Secretary. She said that CIFOR is pleased to be a partner for COMIFAC and would be ready to take the lead on issues that relate to research in the organization of future Forest Day events.



Closing ceremony