



First Parliamentarians Conference on SFM in the Congo Basin Bulletin

A Daily Report of the First International Conference of Parliamentarians on the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ON THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CENTRAL AFRICAN FOREST ECOSYSTEMS: TUESDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2006

The First International Conference of Members of Parliament on the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems commenced proceedings Tuesday, 24 October, in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Attended by parliamentarians and issue experts from inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the conference focuses on good forest governance and poverty alleviation, with the objective of further defining the role of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) and sub-regional parliaments regarding the sustainable forest management (SFM).

In the morning, participants attended the opening ceremony with speeches delivered by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon, government delegations and a range of intergovernmental organizations. In the afternoon, participants explored the conference's first theme, "Harmonization of Forest Policy and Laws, and Sustainable Management of Transboundary Areas," through country case studies. In the evening, participants broke into working groups to discuss issues concerning forest governance.

OPENING CEREMONY

Ibinda Clôbert, Coordinator of the Parliamentarians Network for the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystem (REPAR), stressed that the conservation and sustainable management of Central African forest ecosystems remains a major concern for all stakeholders. He highlighted the importance of economic development in the region and improving local communities' living conditions while respecting conservation standards. Clôbert said parliamentarians should play a greater role in establishing partnership agreements on natural resource conservation in Central Africa.

Teodoro Obiang Nguena, COMIFAC, noted that COMIFAC provides orientation and coordination for planning conservation and sustainable management of forests in Central Africa. He said the involvement of parliamentarians can foster the implementation of COMIFAC's Convergence Plan, enhancing the conservation of forests and their contribution to national economies.

Cavaye Yeguie Dijibril, Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon, welcomed delegates and remarked that the strong attendance was indicative of the interest in SFM. Outlining the actions undermining the preservation of forest resources, including illegal exploitation, poaching, shifting cultivation and slash and burn agriculture, he explained that the challenges are considerable and that the responsibility of parliamentarians is great.

Jonas Nagahuedi, COMIFAC, described the development of COMIFAC and its role in coordinating forest policy development in its member countries, namely: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, the Congo, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe. He described COMIFAC's sub-regional Convergence Plan, including the harmonization of forest policies, noting the financial contributions made by member countries and partners. He highlighted the important role of parliamentarians within this process, including ratification of relevant international treaties and conventions and requested that they act as advocates in this regard.

Giuseppe Topa, World Bank, noted that the Bank recognizes the importance of engaging the legislators in reforming processes, and that without such reforms, progress remains fragile. Samuel Nguiffo, Centre for Environment and Development (CED), summarized the survey findings from a sub-regional survey, including an analysis of the perception of forestry in each country and an action plan. Nguiffo detailed the three components of their action plan: strengthening the Network of Parliamentarians; increasing their involvement in follow-up activities; and addressing transboundary forest crime. He highlighted challenges associated with involving parliamentarians, such as: ensuring coherence between policy and reality; the sustainability of management activities; promotion of equity and governance; and improving quality of information.

Jean Yves Pirot, IUCN, said that the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is the most relevant multilateral environmental convention to forests, including the management of transboundary protected areas. He also noted the relevance of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), due to the pivotal role that forests play within the global carbon cycle. He lamented that despite these conventions, biodiversity loss and climate change have not been adequately addressed, and called upon parliamentarians to ensure that international commitments legislations are adopted and actively supported. He underlined the importance of supporting the COMIFAC Convergence Plan, and reconciling inter-sectoral conflicts.

Niels Marquardt, US Ambassador to the Republic of Cameroon, gave an overview of the Central Africa Regional Programme for Environment (CARPE) approach to natural resource management, observing that the programme was informed by the premise that conservation of Central African forests can only be effective within the framework of good governance at all levels. Regarding CARPE's role in strengthening and supporting governance, he explained how it supported legislative processes by also facilitating regional dialogue for parliamentarians.

Elaborating on the forestry law adopted in 2002, René Sébastien Bofaya-Botak-Baende, Senator, DRC, discussed innovative strategies such as concession contracts which allow local communities to exploit forests attributed to them under the law. He highlighted the importance of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as medicinal plants.

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Mike Packer, Global Legislators Organizing for a Better Environment (GLOBE), explained that GLOBE facilitates high-level dialogue among legislators on key environmental issues. Referring to the illegal logging dialogue launched in September 2005, he said that markets were a potent way to resolve the problem of illegal logging by creating barriers for the entry of illegal timber into consumer countries. He stressed GLOBE's status as an informal legislative-driven process operating outside the governmental negotiating process, which could potentially feed into the G-8 dialogue for illegal logging.

Christopher Besacier, PFBC, stressed the need to identify activities and costs in order to mobilize financial resources for implementing the convergence plan. He urged parliamentarians to exchange views and experiences on debt relief and access to financial resources for the environment.

Clare Brogan, Department for International Development (DfID), said DfID activities focuses on ensuring that natural resources are exploited in a sustainable manner, outlining indirect support provided to projects in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). She highlighted DfID work in Ghana for enhancing parliamentarians' ability to understand international agreements on the environment, forests and partnerships before ratifying them.

DISCUSSION: Participants discussed, *inter alia*: a proposed synergistic approach to tackle illegal logging in partnership with the EU, to be managed by the Central African Parliament; the need for capacity building; calls for pledges and commitments from development partners to strengthen the network of parliamentarians; and the need to compensate local communities for protecting their forests.

SUB-THEME 1: HARMONIZATION OF FOREST POLICY AND LAW

René Sébastien Bofaya-Botak-Baende, Senator, DRC, moderated a session on the harmonization of forest policy and management of transboundary protected areas.

Syaka Sadio, FAO, and Roger Roteur, FAO, described a joint initiative between COMIFAC and FAO to harmonize forest policy in the region, noting the importance of engaging parliamentarians. He identified benefits of harmonization, including hindering the movement of unscrupulous forest companies.

Gerald Ozagiriza, Burundi, observed his country's forests have been degraded due to bush fires, clearing for agriculture, the 1993 political crisis and the over reliance on wood for fuel. He outlined strategies undertaken to mitigate these threats, including: awareness raising; improved management of transboundary areas; and the development of alternative income generating activities for forest dwellers. Noting that the COMIFAC treaty is currently before Parliament for adoption, he elaborated on initiatives undertaken to harmonization environmental laws and the management of transboundary resources. He also mentioned the environmental officers who engage in dissuasive dialogue to prevent degradation of the natural resource base.

Fotabe Basoua, Cameroon, described his country's action plan for managing forest resources, noting the synergy between the Cameroon parliament and the Ministry of Forestry. Observing the effective decentralization of forestry management and the right of communities to manage their forests, she lamented setbacks suffered due to illegal logging, corruption and lack of capacity. She highlighted Cameroon's efforts to facilitate sub regional cooperation, such as hosting the present conference and ratification of the COMIFAC treaty.

Jean Marie Mokole, Central African Republic, said that forests account for approximately 16% of the Central African Republic's gross domestic product (GDP). He noted the need to harmonize conservation strategies and balance protection of natural resources with development. Mokole summarized national efforts to promote cooperation and to establish transboundary resource management partnerships.

Ibinda Clôbert, Congo, summarized the development of Congo's national forest legislation, which aims to promote transparency in administration, fulfill community needs and generate State revenue.

René Sébastien Bofaya-Botak-Baende, Senator, DRC, proposed a declaration asserting the commitment of countries present to strengthen the network of parliamentarians and create a more permanent organization to coordinate and sustain the network.

Boussengue Joseph Marie, Gabon, outlined the international agreements ratified by Gabon and the transboundary conservation projects. He detailed Gabon's participation in an FAO survey on harmonization of fiscal processes, and discussed Gabon's desire to increase the involvement of local populations in forest management.

Teodoro Obiang Nguena, Equatorial Guinea, stressed that the sustainable use of natural resources must result in benefits to local communities. He noted national legislation protecting biodiversity and fostering the importance of rational exploitation of wood.

Jaime José da Costa, São Tomé and Príncipe stressed that environmental legislations in Central Africa are not well enforced, noting the absence of a common forestry strategy, and effective monitoring of forest resources.

DISCUSSION: Participants expressed concern over the need for international assistance to strengthen the parliamentary network, and noted the destructive environmental impact of armed conflict.

PARALLEL SESSIONS ON FOREST GOVERNANCE

EBOWA FORUM: In a session on the Ebolowa Forum: Multi-Actor Dialogue on Forest Concession 1050, the IUCN, the Ministry of the Environment and Forest Cameroon, FIFCAM, local councilors and NGOs made presentations detailing the experiences of the Ebolowa initiative. Delegates discussed Ebolowa, agreed it was an excellent pilot project, and whether it could be replicated in other areas.

FOREST CONCESSION MONITORING SYSTEMS: A session on forest concession monitoring systems, anti-poaching operations and control for the legality of timber in Cameroon was coordinated by Claus Falkenberg, GTZ. Florent Dirk Thies, GTZ, outlined the Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) strategy in Cameroon for combating poverty and promoting judiciary security in the forest sector. Karl Morrison, World Resource Institute (WRI) stressed that certification is a step towards sustainability and legality, and highlighted the importance of verification. Elie Hakizumwami, WWF-Central Africa Regional Programme Office (CARPO) presented the results of a project to define legality within the timber trade, used to prepare guidelines to verify the legality of timber products in 10 countries across Africa and Asia. Caroline Happi, IUCN-BRAC, outlined activities resulting from a joint partnership between the government of Cameroon and CAMRAIL to combat anti-poaching and the control of timber legality.

REFADD: Delegates met in a session on African Women Network for Sustainable Development (REFADD), chaired by Bashige Eulalie. Participants were given an overview of REFADD, projects implemented, achievements and constraints, and focal points from Cameroon, Burundi and the Central African Republic shared experiences. Yigbedek Bissek highlighted how REFADD, a network of NGOs consisting mainly of women, works towards the sustainable management of natural resources as well as implementing and monitoring conservation projects in Central African sub-regions. She underscored that the main areas of intervention include lobbying and advocacy on law enforcement and good governance in the management of natural resources.



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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ON THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CENTRAL AFRICAN FOREST ECOSYSTEMS: WEDNESDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2006

The First International Conference of Members of the Parliament on the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems continued on Wednesday, 25 October, in Yaoundé, Cameroon. In the morning, participants explored the conference's second theme "Working out strategies for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of sub-regional biodiversity policy," through country and regional case studies. In the afternoon, participants divided into three working groups on forest taxation, partnerships, and national legislation and international agreements. In the evening, delegates convened into three parallel sessions to hear presentations on forest certification, women's participation in natural resource management and innovative tools in forest management initiatives.

SUB-THEME 2: STRATEGIES FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF SUB-REGIONAL BIODIVERSITY POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Salah Mahamat Nour, Chad, discussed the harmonization of policies, forest legislation and the sustainable management of transboundary resources in Chad. Nour stressed the role of parliamentarians in implementing financial plans and their importance as advocates for raising funds for development.

Claus-Michael Falkenberg, GTZ, discussed strategies for the monitoring and evaluation of the sub-regional biodiversity policies and their implementation. He noted the existence of clear political will for monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation in the Central African region, as well as operationalizing a common vision through the Convergence Plan. Falkenberg summarized a range of monitoring and evaluation initiatives, including activities undertaken by NGOs. Stressing that new approaches were not necessary, he noted the need to consolidate existing data and build upon this. He underscored that quality data motivates continued development activities and helps donors to assess whether financial resources are being used efficiently.

Roger Ngoufo, Cameroon Environmental Watch (CEW), outlined how his organization seeks to contribute to setting standards and developing forestry legislation. Highlighting methodologies for tracking transportation of wildlife to major urban centers, he said that a significant proportion of hunting and transportation activities were conducted outside the legal framework. He elaborated on survey frameworks to chart hunting activities and trace marketing networks for game, lamenting the lack of sufficient data at control and check points.

René Oyono, Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), discussed the role of the environmental legislators in Central Africa. He drew attention to interstate violence, decentralization of forest management and increased trade with China, factors which must be taken into account when formulating forestry management strategies. He underscored the necessity of legal reforms to promote local communities' access to and ownership of forestry resources, emphasizing that parliamentarians should be the instigators of these reforms.

Nicolas Shuku Onemba, DRC, discussed reducing environmental impacts in forested areas, and promoting sustainable development in Central Africa. He outlined the legal requirement for pre-project environmental impact assessment. He noted the need to implement SFM in the Congo Basin, pointing out forest concessions and certification as important issues.

Angeline Ndo Engolo Evina, National Assembly, Cameroon, described the role that parliamentarians can play within a multi-actor partnership, citing the case of Campo Ma'an Model Forest. She noted the presence of conflicts due to forest concessions and the need to promote dialogue and transparency. Ndo Engolo Evina indicated that the innovative approach to involving stakeholders early in the process ensures community ownership and highlights the value of forests in local, national and international levels.

Bradley Kinder, World Resources Institute, introduced an initiative to monitor the environmental performance of legislative institutions. He explained the objective was to increase accountability of parliaments and parliamentarians to their constituents. Clement Kalonga, Malawi, summarized the methodology of the study which involved analysis of Handsar, papers, committee reports, engaged attendance and media reports.

Shamisa Mtisi, Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association, outlined the findings, including that parliamentarians have limited environmental knowledge and tend not to ask questions or debate in parliament. He noted the constraints of the study, including poor record keeping of activities in parliament. Mtisi outlined the next steps to engage in policy dialogue and ensure parliamentarians understanding of their role.

Abunaw Rose Makia, Caucus of Parliamentarians for Environment Protection, discussed Cameroon's experience of building capacity for effective representation of the environment by parliamentarians. She noted that the Caucus promotes good governance and is committed to improving the performance of the legislative power and strengthening the relationship between parliamentarians and their constituents. She concluded by stating that she expects this conference will contribute to broadening the knowledge base of parliamentarians and allow them to make concrete and informed decisions on environmental issues.

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DISCUSSION: In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed the importance of promoting the use of impact studies and reducing the costs. Arthur Bainomgisha, Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE), reiterated parliamentarians should support the institutionalization of the Parliamentary Caucus, even after leaving office.

SUB-THEME 3: FINANCING MECHANISMS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY

Martine Billanou, Netherlands' Development Organization (SNV), explained the sub-theme was divided into two issues: parliamentarians and mustering of financial resources for the implementation of the Convergence Plan; and natural resources conservation and the fight against poverty. She summarized SNV's activities on forestry, good governance and partnerships.

PARLIAMENTARIANS AND MUSTERING OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVERGENCE

PLAN: Christophe Besacier, CBFP, outlined the role of parliamentarians in the mobilization of resources for the Convergence Plan. He indicated that COMIFAC will establish a financial mechanism to implement the Convergence Plan, which will receive governmental and voluntary contributions. Besacier said COMIFAC also recommended the establishment of a harmonized tax, with a percentage to be earmarked to fund the activities under the Convergence Plan.

Shandrak Eketto Ondoua, National Agency for the Support and Development of Forests (ANAFOR), discussed forestry renewal strategies in Cameroon and explained how renewal activities were being implemented by local communities and the private sector.

Zac Tchoudjeu, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), indicated how local communities were enhancing their incomes and undertaking SFM by cultivating high-level indigenous NTFPs to address the price vulnerability of cash crop species such as coffee and cocoa.

Karl Morrison, WRI, introduced the study on redistribution of forest benefits to local communities. René Oyono, CIFOR, presented the results and explained how forestry can reduce poverty, increase involvement of stakeholders and promote decentralization of forestry taxation. He recommended that parliamentarians review mechanisms for managing forest royalties to increase benefits to local communities.

Jean Marie Mindja, African Women's Network for Sustainable Development (REFADD), said that REFADD facilitates the involvement of women in sustainable management of natural resources, and underlined strategies that were related to the Convergence Plan and the exploitation of NTFPs.

Divine Foundjem, ICRAF, presented an innovative approach to conservation and management of natural resources for poverty alleviation, which mobilizes farmers to sell NTFPs, enhances their negotiating skills and enables them to develop viable market strategies. Highlighting the constraints faced by farmers in marketing NTFPs including poor organization, limited market knowledge and inadequate storage facilities, he emphasized the need to promote partnerships between farmers and traders.

Senator William Mu Nyembabazi, Burundi, and Salvador Ndabirorere, Enviro-Protéc, Burundi, presented joint projects against poverty in Burundi. Senator William Mu Nyembabazi underscored the need to reconcile development and sustainable management, involving all stakeholders and promoting partnerships for carrying out socially and environmentally

friendly activities to combat poverty. Ndabirorere said that Enviro-Protéc focuses on promoting environmental education, awareness and stakeholder participation to promote conservation, sustainable management of natural resources, as well as fighting against poverty.

In the ensuing discussion delegates discussed the possibilities of compensating local communities for conservation of forests and for the use of NTFPs, the national adjustments needed for implementing the Convergence Plan and the importance of financial resources for carrying out SFM activities.

WORKING GROUPS

NATIONAL LEGISLATION: Moderated by Bofaya Botaka-Baende, DRC, this working group met to consider national legislation, sub-regional initiatives and international conventions. After deliberating at length on the definitions of terms, the group identified sub-regional initiatives for forest management such as COMIFAC, AFLEG, and FLEG. Questioning whether these initiatives contributed to the implementation of the Convergence Plan, delegates drew attention to the treaty ratification status of COMIFAC, lamenting that few countries had ratified it and called for a recommendation that the process be fast-tracked. Regarding the role of parliamentarians in the implementation of national legislation and conventions, participants raised the issue of consistency of forestry legislation with land tenure laws, addressing the fact that national and sub-regional laws did not always reflect the provisions of international conventions.

FOREST TAXATION: Moderated by Timothee Fomete Nembot, Cameroon, the Forest Taxation working group discussed the impact of taxation on SFM, mechanisms to collect and redistribute taxes, and the elaboration of an action plan for parliamentarians to make better use of budgets. Debate focused on the issue of Cameroon Annual Forestry Fees (RFA) and the role of parliamentarians. Fomete Nembot summarized the three recommendations from the deliberations. The first recommended increased sharing of information amongst parliamentarians on the modalities of taxation legislation with regard to local and sustainable development. The second involved increasing the capacity for parliamentarians to use tax revenues efficiently for local development. The third, specific to Cameroon, recommended updating the legal framework to involve parliamentarians in local governance of tax revenue.

PARLIAMENTARIANS AND PARTNERSHIPS: The session on parliamentarians and partnerships for sustainable development of forest resources was moderated by Matsembe Appohinaire, Gabon, with Salvador Ndabirorere, Enviro-Protéc, Burundi, acting as rapporteur. Appohinaire highlighted the group's mandate to discuss: the elements of a list of partners to work with the parliamentarians; an action plan for promoting partnership among parliamentarians and other actors; obstacles and opportunities for REPAR-CEFDHAC to promote partnerships with other identified actors; the ways to assess partnership opportunities among REPAR-CEFDHAC, GLOBE, CBFP, donors, and other relevant organizations; and obstacles and opportunities to link development and partnerships for promoting SFM. Delegates debated the appropriate methodology, strategy and format to obtain such outcomes. A few delegates highlighted the need to identify the indicators for the list of partners. There was a general consensus within the group that social, political, technical and scientific partners need to be identified at all levels. Several delegates suggested such partners should assist in implementing the Convergence Plan.



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The First International Conference of Members of Parliament on the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems entered its third day of discussions on Thursday, 26 October, in Yaoundé, Cameroon. In the morning, participants took part in field trips to an agroforestry research station, and a forestry school in Mbalmayo. In the evening delegates reconvened to listen to and discuss presentations made by moderators and rapporteurs of the parallel working groups on: national laws, sub-regional initiatives and international agreements; parliaments and partnerships for SFM; forest taxation; governance, and opportunities and challenges in community forests.

PRESENTATION OF GROUP PROCEEDINGS

PARTNERSHIPS: Moderator Appolinaire Matsembe reported on the group's deliberations and provided a brief appraisal of the methodology adopted by the working group to identify various partners and define the ability of each of the partners to promote SFM. Salvator Ndabirorere, Rapporteur, outlined opportunities for and constraints on partnerships, and said the group recommended actions for more effective partnerships. The first recommendation was the institutionalization of REPAR-CEFDHAC in the action plan. The second recommendation was to restructure and bolster existing resources in the area of sustainable resource management.

In the ensuing discussion, delegates discussed how REPAR can work more effectively, and its related costs. Addressing a delegate's suggestion of elaborating a chronogram of work for the action plan that is being discussed, the Moderator said that the group will discuss this on Friday.

Another delegate proposed establishing a union commission within the Central Africa region that would: have legislative power; take care of environmental and forest issues; and investigate the reasons for non-compliance with existing environmental legislations. He also suggested more interaction between the legislative and executive powers.

Moderator Matsembe noted that REPAR is the forum for discussion of environmental issues concerning Central Africa, and that suggestions should respect the legislative competence of each country and its national constitution.

FOREST TAXATION: Presenting the working group proceedings on forest taxation the moderator Timothee Fomete drew attention to discrepancies between the tax regimes of the Central African countries, and noted that forest exploitation was not generally beneficial to local communities.

Emmanuel Bayani Ngoyi reported that all the Congo basin countries had forest taxation regimes relating to tax felling and surface area, the revenues from which contributed to development activities. In relation to inconsistencies in

taxation rates, where high taxes encouraged unsustainable exploitation, the group noted the need to formulate modalities for distributing revenues, proposing that parliamentarians be instrumental in disseminating information relating to forest legislation as well as identifying appropriate projects, calling for the harmonization of laws and the need to check arbitrary executive action. Participants discussed the harmonization of the taxation rates in addition to discussing the modalities of a forest regeneration tax.

GOVERNANCE, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN COMMUNITY FORESTS: Patrice Passe Sanand, Central Africa Republic, presented findings from the working group's deliberations on governance and opportunities and challenges in involving local communities in the management of community forests. He said the group identified several constraints: the poor synergy between institutions; misappropriation of funds; chaotic use of resources; lack of incentive mechanisms; illegal activities; the absence of reforestation strategies; and the inequitable distribution of benefits. Passe Sanand indicated that parliamentarians should act as the interface between the executive power and citizens, noting the need for: capacity building for parliamentarians; a forest database; harmonization of forests policies and follow up implementation of laws by the executive.

In the ensuing discussion, some participants expressed concern that tax revenues are benefiting communities exploiting forests unsustainably, rather than compensating those communities that promote forest conservation. Participants also noted that Central African forests serve as lungs for filtering pollution created by developed countries and that these polluters should pay compensation. Another participant noted the need to build capacity amongst parliamentarians on international conventions, such as the Kyoto Protocol, which incorporates the "polluter pays principle". Another participant proposed that governments should not wait for financing and should allocate 2% of the annual budget to protection and management of forest ecosystems.

NATIONAL LAWS, SUB-REGIONAL INITIATIVES AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS: Rapporteur Joel Loumeto, Congo, presented the work of his group on the issue of national laws, sub-regional initiatives and international agreements. He underscored that delegates discussed strategies for an action plan in order to involve parliamentarians in implementing national legislation and proposed a definition of sub-regional initiatives. Loumeto outlined the group's suggestion of strategies to involve parliamentarians to enforce national legislation and international conventions, including the need to promote consistency between environmental and land tenure legislation and to update the draft action plan. He noted that the group also debated the relationship between national laws and international conventions on SFM. He said the group identified a list of sub-regional institutions that could work with REPAR for promoting enforcement.

Moderator of the plenary session, Abonem A. Tchoyi, Cameroon, suggested a small drafting group be formed to include the suggestions of delegates and update the draft declaration to be presented before plenary on Friday.



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SUMMARY OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ON THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CENTRAL AFRICAN FOREST ECOSYSTEMS: 24-27 OCTOBER 2006

The First International Conference of Parliamentarians on the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems convened from Tuesday, 24 October, to Friday 26 October, in Yaoundé, Cameroon. Attended by more than 400 parliamentarians and issue experts from inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the conference focused on good forest governance and poverty alleviation, with the objective of further defining the role of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) and subregional parliaments regarding sustainable forest management (SFM).

Throughout the week, delegates convened in plenary sessions to hear country case studies from the Central Africa region and explore the conference’s three sub-themes: Harmonization of Forest Policy and Laws, and Sustainable Management of Transboundary Areas; Working Out Strategies for Monitoring and Evaluating the Implementation of Subregional Biodiversity Policy; and Financing Mechanisms and the Fight Against Poverty. Delegates also met in smaller working groups and parallel sessions to discuss: forest taxation; partnerships; national legislation, subregional initiatives and international agreements; forest governance; forest certification; women’s participation in natural resource management; and innovative tools for forest management.

On Thursday morning, participants took part in field trips to an agroforestry research station and a forestry school in Mbalmayo, Cameroon. On Friday morning, parliamentarians met in a closed session, and in the afternoon, plenary reconvened to adopt the Yaoundé Declaration, postpone the revision of the draft action plan, and attend the closing ceremonies. The Declaration, *inter alia*, encourages the Network of Parliamentarians for the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems (REPAR) and the Parliament of Cameroon to organize subregional meetings on good governance of forest resources, and to present the results at the next Parliamentarian Conference, to be held in Equatorial Guinea in 2008. The draft action plan contains three priority actions: institutional development of REPAR; enhancing REPAR involvement in forest sector monitoring; and combating transboundary forest crime. Both national and subregional level activities are proposed to contribute to each of these actions.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF RELATED PROCESSES

The development of a common vision for Central African forests began in May 1996 with the Conference on Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems (CEFDHAC) held in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo. The conference brought together parliamentarians, ministers, technical experts, NGOs, and the private sector, to discuss the process of consultation and harmonization of forest policies (also known as the Brazzaville Process). Parliamentarians expressed an interest in organizing themselves to engage effectively in national, subregional and international forums. In March 1999, the Central African Heads of State met in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and reaffirmed their commitment to SFM and achieving a common vision with the adoption of the “Yaoundé Declaration,” which paved the way for a subregional process to harmonize forest and environmental policies. This led to the creation of REPAR within the CEFDHAC, at Libreville, Gabon in April 2001, with the goal of ensuring good governance within Central African SFM.

In February 2005, during the second Central African Heads of State summit in Brazzaville, the COMIFAC Treaty, which includes a commitment to on-the-ground implementation,

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was signed. Member countries also adopted a subregional Convergence Plan for the sustainable management of the forest and environment sectors in Central Africa.

AMCEN, THE AU AND NEPAD

AMCEN: The African Ministerial Conference on the Environment is a permanent forum of African environment ministers, created in Cairo in 1985 after the adoption of the Cairo Programme for African Co-operation. It convenes every two years, with the UNEP Regional Office for Africa serving as its secretariat. AMCEN aims to halt environmental degradation and promote sustainable development in Africa by enhancing inter-governmental co-operation, to: provide advocacy for environmental protection and ensure that basic human needs are met adequately and in a sustainable manner; ensure that social and economic development is realized at all levels; and guarantee that agricultural activities and practices meet the food security needs of the region. AMCEN's current programme of work has many elements pertinent to forests, including policy and advocacy and the African Environment Outlook process. Its 11th annual session, held in Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo, 22-26 May 2006, which included expert group and ministerial segments, considered, *inter alia*, AMCEN's 2004-2006 programme of work, and the action plan for the environment initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It resulted in the adoption of 11 decisions and the Brazzaville Declaration, which seek to further AMCEN's goal of halting environmental degradation and promoting sustainable development in Africa.

AU: The African Union (AU) resulted from a declaration made by the Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity on 9 September 1999, in Sirte, Libya. This was with a view to accelerating the process of Africa's integration and enabling the continent to play a stronger role within the global economy, while addressing social, economic and political challenges. AU objectives include: achieving African unity and socioeconomic integration; defending member state sovereignty; promoting peace, security and good governance; protecting human rights; and achieving sustainable development. The AU Commission, as the AU's primary management body, represents and defends the AU's interests, and prepares strategic plans. AMCEN is currently holding discussions with the AU's Secretariat, and it is expected AMCEN will eventually become a Specialized Technical Committee of the AU Commission.

NEPAD: NEPAD is an AU programme designed to meet development objectives, including poverty eradication, sustainable growth, integration into the global economy, and the empowerment of women. NEPAD held a thematic workshop on forests in Yaoundé, on 13-14 February 2003, to further elaborate forest activities and to identify an action plan with concrete project proposals and timelines. The results of this workshop became the main input regarding forests within the development of the Action Plan of the Environment Initiative of NEPAD.

FOREST LAW ENFORCEMENT AND GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA

In May 1998, the G8 launched an action programme on forests, which prioritizes the elimination of illegal logging and timber trade, and seeks to complement actions undertaken at the regional and international levels. Soon after the Yaoundé Summit, ministers from several countries in Africa initiated

the African Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) process, as part of NEPAD, to strengthen high-level commitment in Africa to build capacity for forest law enforcement, in particular relating to illegal logging and hunting, associated trade, and corruption.

ITTC: In May 2002, the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC) at its 32nd session adopted a decision on forest law enforcement in Africa, which calls for data collection on forests in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Republic of Congo, in order to improve forest concession management and ensure conservation of protected areas. ITTC-32 also decided to promote SFM in the Congo Basin by engaging in a World Summit on Sustainable Development "Type 2" partnership, organizing a workshop to develop a regionally applied research programme, and contributing to the establishment of a regional strategy aimed at improving forest concession management.

YAOUNDÉ AFLEG MINISTERIAL: Co-hosted by the Government of Cameroon and the World Bank, the Yaoundé AFLEG Ministerial Conference took place from 13-16 October 2003. The objectives of the conference were to: share and explore ideas on forest governance; consider priority issues, including illegal forest exploitation and associated trade in Africa; and identify ways in which various stakeholders can address these issues, including partnerships between producers and consumers, donors, civil society and the private sector. The meeting produced a Ministerial Declaration and AFLEG Action Plan, emphasizing the need for: institutional and policy reforms; mobilization of financial resources for communities dependent on forest resources to reduce illegal activities; promotion of cooperation between law enforcement agencies within and among countries; involvement of local communities in decision making; awareness raising regarding the impact of illegal logging and associated trade; and advancement of implementation of the AFLEG objectives within NEPAD and other processes.

REPORT OF THE AFRICAN PARLIAMENTARIANS MEETING ON FORESTS

OPENING CEREMONY

Ibinda Clôbert, Coordinator of the Network of Parliamentarians for the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems (REPAR), stressed that the conservation and sustainable management of Central African forest ecosystems remains a major concern for all stakeholders. He highlighted the importance of economic development in the region and improving local communities' living conditions while respecting conservation standards. Clôbert said parliamentarians should play a greater role in establishing partnership agreements on natural resource conservation in Central Africa.



Ibinda Clôbert, Coordinator of the Network of Parliamentarians for the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems (REPAR)

Teodoro Obiang Nguena, Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), noted that COMIFAC provides orientation and coordination for planning conservation and sustainable management of forests in Central Africa. He said parliamentarians can assist in the implementation of COMIFAC's Convergence Plan, by enhancing the conservation of forests and their contribution to national economies.



Teodoro Obiang Nguena, Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC)

Cavaye Yeguie Djibril, Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon, welcomed delegates and remarked that the strong attendance was indicative of the interest in sustainable forest management (SFM). Outlining the actions undermining the preservation of forest resources, including illegal exploitation, poaching, shifting cultivation and slash and burn agriculture, he explained that the challenges are considerable and that the responsibility of parliamentarians is great.

Jonas Nagahuedi, COMIFAC, described the development of COMIFAC and its role in coordinating forest policy development in its member countries, namely: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe. He described COMIFAC's subregional Convergence Plan, including the harmonization of forest policies, noting the financial contributions made by member countries and partners. He highlighted the important role of parliamentarians in advocating the ratification of relevant international treaties and conventions.

Giuseppe Topa, World Bank, noted that the Bank recognizes the importance of engaging the legislators in reforming processes, and that without such reforms, progress remains fragile.

Samuel Nguiffo, Centre for Environment and Development, summarized the findings of a subregional survey, including an analysis of the perception of forestry in each country. Nguiffo detailed the three components of REPAR's action plan: strengthening the Network of Parliamentarians; increasing their involvement in follow-up activities; and addressing transboundary forest crime. He highlighted challenges associated with involving parliamentarians, such as: ensuring coherence between policy and reality; ensuring the sustainability of management activities; promoting equity and governance; and improving quality of information.

Jean-Yves Pirot, IUCN – The World Conservation Union, said that the Convention on Biological Diversity is the multilateral environmental convention most relevant to forests, including the management of transboundary protected areas. He also noted the relevance of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, due to the pivotal role that forests play within the global carbon cycle. He lamented that despite these conventions, biodiversity loss and climate change have not been adequately addressed, and called upon parliamentarians to

ensure that international commitments are adopted and actively supported. He underlined the importance of supporting the COMIFAC Convergence Plan, and reconciling inter-sectoral conflicts.

Niels Marquardt, US Ambassador to Cameroon, gave an overview of the Central Africa Regional Programme for Environment (CARPE) approach to natural resource management, observing that the programme was informed by the premise that conservation of Central African forests can only be effective within the framework of good governance at all levels. Regarding CARPE's role in strengthening and supporting governance, he explained how it supported legislative processes by also facilitating regional dialogue for parliamentarians.

Elaborating on the forestry law adopted in 2002, Joseph Ruhanamirindi, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), discussed innovative strategies such as concession contracts that allow local communities to exploit forests attributed to them under the law. He highlighted the importance of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as medicinal plants.

Mike Packer, Global Legislators Organizing for a Better Environment (GLOBE), explained that GLOBE facilitates high-level dialogue among legislators on key environmental issues. Referring to the G8 illegal logging dialogue launched in September 2006, he said that markets were a potent way to resolve the problem of illegal logging by creating barriers for the entry of illegal timber into consumer countries. He stressed GLOBE's status as an informal legislative-driven process operating outside the governmental negotiating process, which could potentially feed into the G8 dialogue.

Christopher Besacier, Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), stressed the need to identify activities and costs in order to mobilize financial resources for implementing the Convergence Plan. He urged parliamentarians to exchange views and experiences on debt relief and access to financial resources for the environment.

Clare Brogan, UK Department for International Development (DfID), said DfID activities focus on ensuring that natural resources are exploited in a sustainable manner,

outlining indirect support provided to projects in Burundi and DRC. She highlighted DfID work in Ghana for enhancing parliamentarians' ability to understand international agreements on the environment, forests and partnerships before ratifying them.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, delegates convened in sub-thematic meetings, parallel sessions, and working groups. The working groups shared their findings in plenary on Thursday, and on Friday the meeting concluded with a parliamentarians session and the closing ceremony. This report summarizes the proceedings chronologically, including the presentations and the outcomes of the plenary, followed by a summary of the Yaoundé Declaration and draft action plan.



Clare Brogan, UK Department for International Development (DfID)

SUB-THEME 1: HARMONIZATION OF FOREST POLICY AND LAWS, AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY AREAS

René Sébastien Bofaya-Botak-Baende, DRC, moderated a session on the harmonization of forest policy and management of transboundary protected areas.

Syaka Sadio, UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and Roger Roteur, FAO, described a joint initiative between COMIFAC and FAO to harmonize forest policy in the region, noting the importance of engaging parliamentarians. Roteur identified benefits of

harmonization, including hindering the movement of unscrupulous forest companies.

Gerald Ozagiriza, Burundi, stated that his country's forests have been degraded due to bush fires, clearing for agriculture, the 1993 political crisis and the over-reliance on wood for fuel. He outlined strategies undertaken to mitigate these threats, including: awareness raising; improved management of transboundary areas; and the development of alternative income-generating activities for forest dwellers. Noting that the COMIFAC Treaty is currently before parliament for adoption, he elaborated on initiatives undertaken to harmonize environmental laws and the management of transboundary resources. He also highlighted the work of environmental officers in engaging in dissuasive dialogue to prevent degradation of the natural resource base.

Fotabe Basoua, Cameroon, described his country's action plan for managing forest resources, noting the synergy between the Cameroon parliament and the Ministry of Forestry. Observing the effective decentralization of forestry management and the right of communities to manage their forests, she lamented setbacks suffered due to illegal logging, corruption and lack of capacity. She highlighted Cameroon's efforts to facilitate subregional cooperation, such as hosting the present conference and ratifying the COMIFAC Treaty.

Jean-Marie Mokole, Central African Republic, said that forests account for approximately 16% of the Central African Republic's gross domestic product. He noted the need to harmonize conservation strategies and balance protection of natural resources with development. Mokole summarized national efforts to promote cooperation and to establish transboundary resource management partnerships.

Ibinda Clôbert, Republic of the Congo, summarized the development of his country's national forest legislation, which aims to promote transparency in administration, fulfill community needs and generate state revenue.

Bofaya-Botak-Baende proposed a declaration asserting the commitment of countries present to strengthen the network of parliamentarians and create a more permanent organization to coordinate and sustain the network. Joseph Marie Boussegué, Gabon, outlined the international agreements ratified by Gabon and his country's transboundary conservation projects.



René Sébastien Bofaya-Botak-Baende, DRC

He detailed Gabon's participation in an FAO survey on harmonization of fiscal processes, and discussed Gabon's desire to increase the involvement of local populations in forest management.

Teodoro Nguema Obiang, Equatorial Guinea, stressed that the sustainable use of natural resources must result in benefits to local communities. He noted national legislation protecting biodiversity and fostering the importance of rational exploitation of wood. Jaime José da Costa, São Tomé and Príncipe, lamented that environmental legislations in Central Africa are not well enforced, noting the absence of a common forestry strategy, and effective monitoring of forest resources.

SUB-THEME 2: WORKING OUT STRATEGIES FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUBREGIONAL BIODIVERSITY POLICY

Sinalah Mahamat Nour, Chad, discussed the harmonization of policies, forest legislation and the sustainable management of transboundary resources in Chad. Nour stressed the role of parliamentarians in implementing financial plans and their importance as advocates for raising funds for development.

Claus-Michael Falkenberg, GTZ, discussed strategies for the monitoring and evaluation of subregional biodiversity policies and their implementation. He noted the existence of clear political will for monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation in the Central Africa region, as well as operationalizing a common vision through the Convergence Plan. Falkenberg summarized a range of monitoring and evaluation initiatives, including activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Stressing that new approaches were not necessary, he noted the need to consolidate existing data and build upon this. He underscored that quality data motivates continued development activities and helps donors to assess whether financial resources are being used efficiently.

Roger Ngoufo, Cameroon Environmental Watch, outlined how his organization seeks to contribute to setting standards and developing forestry legislation. Highlighting methodologies for tracking transportation of wildlife to major urban centers, he said that a significant proportion of hunting and transportation activities were conducted outside the legal framework. He elaborated on survey frameworks to chart hunting activities and trace marketing networks for game, lamenting the lack of sufficient data at control and check points.

René Oyono, Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), discussed the role of environmental legislators in Central Africa. He drew attention to interstate violence, decentralization of forest management and increased trade with China, factors which must be taken into account when formulating forestry management strategies. He underscored the



René Oyono, Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)

necessity of legal reforms to promote local communities' access to and ownership of forestry resources, emphasizing that parliamentarians should be the instigators of these reforms.

Nicolas Shuku Onemba, DRC, discussed reducing environmental impacts in forested areas, and promoting sustainable development in Central Africa. He outlined the legal requirement for pre-project environmental impact assessment. He noted the need to implement SFM in the Congo Basin, highlighting forest concessions and certification as important issues.

Angeline Ndo Engolo Evina, Cameroon, described the role that parliamentarians can play within a multi-actor partnership, citing the case of Campo Ma'an Model Forest. She noted the presence of conflicts due to forest concessions and the need to promote dialogue and transparency. Ndo Engolo Evina indicated that the innovative approach to involving stakeholders early in the process ensures community ownership and highlights the value of forests in local, national and international levels.

Bradley Kinder, World Resources Institute (WRI), introduced an initiative to monitor the environmental performance of legislative institutions. He explained the objective of the study was to increase accountability of parliaments and parliamentarians to their constituents. Clement Kalonga, Malawi, summarized the methodology of the study, which involved analysis of parliamentary records and committee reports, a review of attendance and participation in parliamentary debate, and media reports.

Shamisa Mtisi, Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association, outlined the findings of the study, including that parliamentarians have limited environmental knowledge and tend not to ask questions or debate in parliament. He noted the constraints of the study, including poor record keeping of activities in parliaments. Mtisi outlined the next steps in engaging in policy dialogue and ensuring parliamentarians' understanding of their role.

Rose Abunaw Makia, Caucus of Parliamentarians for Environment Protection, discussed Cameroon's experience with building capacity for effective representation of the environment by parliamentarians. She noted that the Caucus promotes good governance and is committed to improving the performance of the legislative power and strengthening the relationship between parliamentarians and their constituents. She concluded by voicing her expectations that the conference would contribute to broadening the knowledge base of parliamentarians and allow them to make concrete and informed decisions on environmental issues.

Andre Ikongo-Logan, Republic of the Congo, discussed the problems of drafting state budgets for sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa. He explained that there are many actors involved in the budgetary process and

that some ministries are more important than others. Iknogo-Logan detailed the efforts of the Prime Minister's office to mainstream priorities.

Bernard Foahom, Institute for Agricultural Research for Development (IRAD), Cameroon, discussed the role of parliamentarians in the mobilization of financial resources in forest research in Cameroon. He outlined the need to mainstream forestry research in the action of parliamentarians. Foahom stressed that information is a parliamentarian's strongest tool and that scientific research on forests is indispensable as it allows parliamentarians to make informed decisions.

SUB-THEME 3: FINANCING MECHANISMS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY

Martine Billanou, the Netherlands' Development Organization (SNV), explained the sub-theme was divided into two issues: parliamentarians and mustering of financial resources for the implementation of the Convergence Plan; and natural resources conservation and the fight against poverty. She summarized SNV's activities on forestry, good governance and partnerships.

PARLIAMENTARIANS AND MUSTERING OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVERGENCE

PLAN: Christophe Besacier, CBFP, outlined the role of parliamentarians in the mobilization of resources for the Convergence Plan. He indicated that COMIFAC will establish a financial mechanism to implement the Convergence Plan, which will receive governmental and voluntary contributions. Besacier said COMIFAC also recommended the establishment of a harmonized tax, with a percentage to be earmarked to fund activities under the Convergence Plan.

Shandrak Eketé Ondoua, National Agency for the Support and Development of Forests, Cameroon, discussed forestry renewal strategies in Cameroon and explained how renewal activities were being implemented by local communities and the private sector.

Zac Tchoudjeu, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), indicated how local communities were enhancing their incomes and undertaking SFM by cultivating high-value indigenous NTFPs to address the price vulnerability of cash crop species such as coffee and cocoa. Karl Morrison, WRI, introduced the study on redistribution of forest benefits to local communities. René Oyono, CIFOR, presented the results and explained how forest resources can reduce poverty, increase involvement of stakeholders and promote decentralization of forestry taxation. He recommended that parliamentarians review mechanisms for managing forest royalties to increase benefits to local communities.

Jean Marie Mindja, African Women's Network for Sustainable Development (REFADD), said that REFADD facilitates the involvement of women in sustainable



Shamisa Mtisi, Zimbabwe Environmental Law Association



Christophe Besacier, CBFP

management of natural resources, and outlined strategies that were related to the Convergence Plan and the exploitation of NTFPs.

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND THE FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY: Divine Foundjem, ICRAF, presented an innovative approach to conservation and management of natural resources for poverty alleviation, which mobilizes farmers to sell NTFPs, enhances their negotiating skills and enables them to develop viable marketing strategies. Highlighting the constraints faced by farmers in marketing NTFPs, including poor organization, limited market knowledge and inadequate storage facilities, he emphasized the need to promote partnerships between farmers and traders.

William Mu Nyembabazi, Burundi, and Salvador Ndabirorere, Enviro-Protec, Burundi, presented joint projects to alleviate poverty in Burundi. Mu Nyembabazi underscored the need to reconcile development and sustainable management, involving all stakeholders and promoting partnerships for carrying out socially and environmentally sound activities to combat poverty. Ndabirorere said that Enviro-Protec focuses on fighting poverty and promoting environmental education, awareness and stakeholder participation to promote conservation and sustainable management of natural resources. In the ensuing discussion, delegates discussed the possibilities of compensating local communities for conservation of forests and for the use of NTFPs, the national adjustments needed for implementing the Convergence Plan, and the importance of financial resources for carrying out SFM activities.

WORKING GROUPS

NATIONAL LEGISLATION: Moderated by Bofaya-Botak-Baende, this working group met to consider national legislation, subregional initiatives and international conventions. After deliberating at length on the definitions of terms, the group identified subregional initiatives for forest management such as COMIFAC, African Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG), and Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG). Questioning whether these initiatives contributed to the implementation of the Convergence Plan, delegates drew attention to the ratification status of the COMIFAC Treaty, lamenting that few countries had ratified it, and called for a recommendation that the process be fast-tracked. Regarding the role of parliamentarians in the implementation of national legislation and conventions, participants raised the issue of consistency of forestry legislation with land tenure laws, addressing the fact that national and subregional laws did not always reflect the provisions of international conventions.

Rapporteur Joel Loumeto, Republic of the Congo, presented the group's work to plenary. He said that delegates discussed strategies for an action plan in order to involve parliamentarians in implementing national legislation and proposed a definition of subregional initiatives. Loumeto outlined the group's suggestions of strategies to involve parliamentarians in enforcing national legislation and international conventions, including the need to promote consistency between environmental and land tenure legislation and to update the draft action plan. He noted that the group also debated the relationship between national laws and international conventions on SFM. He said the group identified a list of subregional institutions that could work with REPAR for promoting enforcement.

FOREST TAXATION: Moderated by Timothee Fomete Nembot, Cameroon, this working group discussed the impact of taxation on SFM, mechanisms to collect and redistribute taxes, and the elaboration of an action plan for parliamentarians to make better use of budgets. Debate focused on the issue of Cameroon Annual Forestry Fees, and the role of parliamentarians. Fomete Nembot summarized the three recommendations from the deliberations, namely to: increase sharing of information amongst parliamentarians on the modalities of taxation legislation with regard to local and sustainable development; increase the capacity for parliamentarians to use tax revenues efficiently for local development; and, specific to Cameroon, to update the legal framework to involve parliamentarians in local governance of tax revenue.

Presenting the working group's proceedings to plenary, Fomete Nembot drew attention to discrepancies between the tax regimes of the Central African countries, and noted that forest exploitation was not generally beneficial to local communities. Emmanuel Bayani Ngoyi, Gabon, reported that all the Congo Basin countries had forest taxation regimes, taxing felling and surface area, and that related revenues contributed to development activities. In relation to inconsistencies in taxation rates, where high taxes encouraged unsustainable exploitation, he said the group: noted the need to formulate modalities for distributing revenues; proposed that parliamentarians be instrumental in disseminating information relating to forest legislation as well as identifying appropriate projects; and called for harmonization of laws and the need to check arbitrary executive action. Participants discussed the harmonization of taxation rates in addition to discussing the modalities of a forest regeneration tax.

PARLIAMENTARIANS AND PARTNERSHIPS: The session on parliamentarians and partnerships for sustainable development of forest resources was moderated by Matsembe Apollinaire, Gabon, with Salvador Ndabirorere, Enviro-Protec, Burundi, acting as rapporteur. Apollinaire highlighted the group's mandate to discuss: the elements of a list of partners to work with the parliamentarians; an action plan for promoting partnerships among parliamentarians and other actors; obstacles and opportunities for REPAR to promote partnerships with other identified actors; the ways to assess partnership opportunities among REPAR, GLOBE, CBFP, donors, and other relevant organizations; and obstacles and opportunities to link development and partnerships for promoting SFM. Delegates debated the appropriate methodology, strategy and format to obtain such outcomes. There was a general consensus within the group that social, political, technical and scientific partners need to be identified at all levels. Several delegates suggested such partners should assist in implementing the Convergence Plan.



Parliamentarians and partnerships working group session

Apollinaire reported to plenary on the group's deliberations and provided a brief appraisal of the methodology adopted by the working group to identify various partners and define the ability of each of the partners to promote SFM.

Ndabirorere outlined opportunities for and constraints on partnerships, and said the group recommended actions for more effective partnerships, including: institutionalizing REPAR in the action plan; and restructuring and bolstering existing resources in the area of sustainable resource management. In the ensuing discussion, delegates discussed how REPAR can work more effectively, and its related costs. One delegate proposed establishing a union commission within the Central Africa region that would: have legislative power; take care of environmental and forest issues; and investigate the reasons for non-compliance with existing environmental legislations. He also suggested more interaction between the legislative and executive powers. Apollinaire noted that REPAR is the forum for discussion of environmental issues concerning Central Africa, and that suggestions should respect the legislative competence of each country and its national constitution.

GOVERNANCE, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN COMMUNITY FORESTS: Moderated by René Oyono, Cameroon, this working group discussed constraints and opportunities for promoting local community participation in SFM, and explored successful case studies of sustainable management of forests, fauna and water resources. The group also examined parliamentarians' roles in promoting good governance and community-based forest management.

Presenting the group's deliberations to plenary, rapporteur Patrice Passe Sanand, Central African Republic said the group identified several constraints, including: the poor synergy between institutions; misappropriation of funds; chaotic use of resources; lack of incentive mechanisms; illegal activities; the absence of reforestation strategies; and the inequitable distribution of benefits.

Passe Sanand indicated that parliamentarians should act as the interface between the executive power and citizens, noting the need for: capacity building for parliamentarians; a forest database; harmonization of forests policies and follow-up regarding the implementation of laws by the executive power. In the ensuing discussion, some participants



Rapporteur Patrice Passe Sanand, Central African Republic

expressed concern that tax revenues based on harvest levels benefit communities exploiting forests unsustainably, rather than compensating those communities that promote forest conservation. Participants also noted that Central African forests serve as "nature's lungs," filtering pollution created by developed countries while producing oxygen, and that these polluters should pay compensation. Another participant noted the need to build capacity amongst parliamentarians on international conventions, such as the Kyoto Protocol, which incorporates the "polluter pays principle." Another participant proposed that governments should not wait for financing and should allocate 2% of the annual budget to protection and management of forest ecosystems.

PARALLEL SESSIONS ON FOREST GOVERNANCE

EBOLOWA FORUM: In a session on the Ebolowa Forum: Multi-Actor Dialogue on Forest Concession 1050, the IUCN, the Ministry of the Environment and Forest, Cameroon, local councilors and NGOs made presentations detailing the experiences of the Ebolowa initiative. Delegates discussed Ebolowa, and, agreeing it was an excellent pilot project, whether it could be replicated in other areas.

FOREST CONCESSION MONITORING SYSTEMS: A session on forest concession monitoring systems, anti-poaching operations and control for the legality of timber in Cameroon was coordinated by Claus Falkenberg, GTZ. Florent Dirk Thies, GTZ, outlined the FLEG strategy in Cameroon for combating poverty and promoting judiciary security in the forest sector. Karl Morrison, WRI, stressed that certification is a step towards sustainability and legality, and highlighted the importance of verification. Elie Hakizumwami, WWF-Central Africa Regional Programme Office presented the results of a project to define legality within the timber trade, used to prepare guidelines to verify the legality of timber products in ten countries across Africa and Asia. Caroline Happi, IUCN-Regional Office for Central Africa, outlined activities resulting from a joint partnership between the government of Cameroon and the Cameroon Railways (CAMRAIL) to control timber legality.

REFADD: Delegates met in a session on the African Women's Network for Sustainable Development (REFADD), chaired by Bashige Eulalie, REFADD. Participants were given an overview of REFADD, projects implemented, achievements and constraints, and focal points from Cameroon, Burundi and the Central African Republic shared experiences. Yigbedek Bissek, REFADD, highlighted how REFADD, a network of NGOs consisting mainly of women, works towards the sustainable management of natural resources as well as implementing and monitoring conservation projects in Central African subregions. She said that the main areas of intervention include lobbying and advocacy on law enforcement and good governance in the management of natural resources.



Claus Falkenberg, GTZ

DRAFTING OF THE YAOUNDÉ DECLARATION

On Thursday evening, plenary Moderator Abonem A. Tchoyi, Cameroon, proposed that a small drafting group update the draft declaration with delegates' suggestions. The Declaration was adopted in plenary on Friday.

YAOUNDÉ DECLARATION: The Declaration addresses the issues of forest taxation and SFM, governance and communitarian forests, legislations, politics and international conventions, partnerships, and networks of national and subregional governance. The Declaration, *inter alia*: requests REPAR to operationalize the recommendations of the Declaration; encourages REPAR and the Parliament of Cameroon to organize subregional meetings on good governance of forest resources, with technical and financial

support of interested development partners, and to present the results at the next Parliamentarian Conference; and adopts the principle of holding biannual meetings to assess progress.

DRAFTING OF THE YAOUNDÉ ACTION PLAN

On Friday afternoon, delegates agreed to postpone the deadline to revise the draft action plan to Monday, 30 October, and to make this available for review on REPAR's website.

YAOUNDÉ ACTION PLAN: The draft action plan, modeled after the COMIFAC Convergence Plan, encourages regional cooperative actions to improve the role of parliamentarians in forest management. The draft action plan was considered necessary to ensure that parliamentarians are able to monitor and implement forest laws and policies. The plan recognizes that the forest sector is the second greatest source of revenue for most Congo Basin countries, and has the potential to alleviate rural poverty.

Three priority actions are defined, with national and subregional activities proposed for each. For the first priority action, REPAR institutional development, proposed national activities include:

- formalizing the creation of REPAR, in a form recognized by the standing orders of the national parliament, such as a working group;
- equipping a REPAR office within the parliament;
- adopting simple operating rules (membership, replacement of members, decision making, policy instruments);
- informing the public and stakeholders in the forest sector on the existence of REPAR and its functions; and
- networking with international and/or foreign institutions (such as GLOBE).

Proposed subregional activities include: formalizing the participation of REPAR in subregional bodies (COMIFAC, CEFDHAC and CBFP); instituting periodic consultation meetings of REPAR national representations; and contributing to defining subregional positions on global issues relating to the environment.

For the second priority action, enhancing REPAR involvement in forest sector monitoring, proposed national activities include: improving the quality of information for parliamentarians; and assessing the contribution of the forest sector to the national economy and the fight against poverty.

Proposed subregional activities include:

- forming a parliamentary information mission on the subregional processes and initiatives;
- involving national parliamentarians who are members of REPAR in all subregional bodies for the monitoring of forest management; and
- involving REPAR in the negotiation of Voluntary Partnership Agreements with the European Union.

For the third priority action, combatting transboundary forest crime, proposed national activities include:

- consulting the list of companies guilty of major and/or repeated offences against the forest law;
- making an inventory of branches operating in the various countries of Central Africa; and
- carrying out assessments of foregone tax revenue as a result of transboundary forest crime.

Proposed subregional activities include: preparing a subregional file of forest crimes, taking into account the affiliation of national companies; and contributing to the harmonization of sanctions (including preventative sanctions) in the subregion.

SPECIAL SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Jayme de Costa, Vice-President of the National Assembly of São Tomé and Príncipe, expressed hope that participants would continue towards meeting the conference's stated objectives. He thanked the parliamentarians and the Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon for the warm welcome and hospitality enjoyed by delegates throughout the week.

Immaculée Nahayo, President of the National Assembly, Burundi, stated that Cameroon's efforts indicated their commitment to the sustainable management of Central African forest ecosystems. She underscored the importance of COMIFAC and the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration of AFLEG. Nahayo thanked donors for their support and appealed to them to financially support REPAR and the Convergence Plan.

Célestin Leroy Gaombale, President of the National Assembly, Central African Republic, highlighted the conference's focus on sharing responsibilities in pursuit of SFM. Commenting on efforts made by his country to implement appropriate forest policies, he appealed for enhanced donor support.

Cavaye Yeguie Dijibril, Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon, acknowledged the presence of fellow house speakers which, he said, bore testimony to the importance attached to forestry issues by the Central African States. Recalling the initiation of the REPAR process in Yaoundé in 1999, he observed that parliamentarians are the essential link to mitigating forest degradation, calling on them to reinforce their commitment to SFM by galvanizing participation and building effective partnerships.

CLOSING CEREMONY

Angeline Ndo Engolo Evina, Cameroon, read the Yaoundé Declaration, reviewed the list of its signatories, and confirmed acceptance of Equatorial Guinea's offer to host the Second International Conference of Parliamentarians on the Sustainable Management of Forest Ecosystems.

Laurent Gomina Pampali, Cameroon, thanked the National Assembly and all participants who contributed to the success of the conference.

Yeguie Dijibril, conveying his satisfaction with the meeting, reflected on the quality of presentations and relevance of topics, and the high quality of the Yaoundé Declaration. He thanked Paul Biya, President of Cameroon, Speakers of the National Assemblies of the region, and members of international organizations for their participation. He thanked donors for their ongoing support, and said he looked forward to reconvening in Equatorial Guinea in 2008. Exclaiming "long live subregional cooperation, and long live international cooperation," he declared the meeting closed at 6:34 pm.



Cavaye Yeguie Dijibril, Speaker of the National Assembly of Cameroon

UPCOMING MEETINGS

ITTC-41: The Forty-first Session of the International Tropical Timber Council and Associated Sessions of the Committees will be held from 6-11 November 2006, in Yokohama, Japan. For more information, contact: Manoel Sobral Filho, ITTO Secretariat; tel: +81-45-223-1110; fax: +81-45-223-1111; e-mail: itto@itto.or.jp; Internet: <http://www.itto.or.jp>

G8 ILLEGAL LOGGING DIALOGUE: The First International Advisory Board Meeting of the G8 Illegal Logging Dialogue will be held on November 13 in London, United Kingdom. For more information, contact: Dr Mike Packer, GLOBE International; tel: +44-20-7222-6955; fax: +44-20-7222-6959; e-mail: mike.packer@globeinternational.org; Internet: <http://www.globeinternational.org>

TWELFTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNFCCC AND SECOND MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE KYOTO PROTOCOL: UNFCCC COP-12 and Kyoto Protocol COP/MOP-2 will take place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 6-17 November 2006. These meetings will also coincide with the 25th meetings of the UNFCCC's subsidiary bodies. For more information, contact: UNFCCC Secretariat; tel: +49-228-815-1000; fax: +49-228-815-1999; e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.int; Internet: <http://www.unfccc.int>

FIRST ABS CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOP FOR AFRICA: This workshop takes place in Cape Town, South Africa from 19-24 November 2006. It launches the three year programme of the Dutch-German Access and Benefit-sharing (ABS) Capacity-Building Initiative for Africa. It aims to: explore the experiences with bioprospecting cases in the region for the implementation of ABS regulations at the national and local level; develop a strong vision for ABS in Africa based on trust and mutual understanding; and develop recommendations for international law and policy making on one specific issue area based on participants preference, either gap analysis, practical solutions for regional cooperation or national requirements for certificates of origin. For more information contact: Andreas Drews, GTZ; tel: +49-6196-79-1359; fax: +49-6196-79-6190; e-mail: andreas.drews@gtz.de; Internet: http://www.abs-africa.info/capetown_index.html

SECOND CONFERENCE OF AFRICAN MINISTERS OF THE ECONOMY AND FINANCE (CAMEF II):

This meeting takes place from 20-23 November in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The meeting will address a number of issues, including: financing for development; debt cancellation; oil prices; intra-African trade; and access to markets of the North. For more information, contact: Africa Union Commission; tel: +251-11-551-92-87; fax: +251-11-551-02-49; Internet: <http://www.africa-union.org>

AD HOC EXPERT GROUP ON THE NON-LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT: The UN Forum on Forests *Ad Hoc* Expert Group will meet from 11-15 December 2006 at UN Headquarters, New York. The Expert Group is expected to consider the content of a Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all types of forests prior to the seventh session of UNFF. For more information, contact: UNFF Secretariat; tel: +1-212-963-3160; fax: +1-917-367-3186; e-mail: unff@un.org; Internet: <http://www.unff.org/esa/forests>

AFRICAN REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON

SUSTAINABLE USE: This meeting takes place from 11-15 December 2006 in Nairobi, Kenya. The workshop will address: ecosystem services assessment; financial costs and benefits associated with conservation of biodiversity; and sustainable use of biological resources. The workshop will focus on the applicability of the Addis Ababa Principles and Guidelines to agricultural biodiversity in Africa as a contribution to the review of the work programme of the Convention by

SBSTTA-13. For more information, contact: CBD Secretariat; tel: +1-514-288-2220; fax: +1-514-288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@biodiv.org; Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meeting.aspx?mtg=RWSUAFR-01>

SEVENTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS: UNFF-7 will be held from 16-27 April 2007, at UN headquarters in New York. For more information, contact: UNFF Secretariat; tel: +1-212-963-3160; fax: +1-917-367-3186; e-mail: unff@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/forests>

ITTC-42: The Forty-second Session of the International Tropical Timber Council and Associated Sessions of the Committees will be held from 8-12 May 2007 in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. For more information, contact: Manoel Sobral Filho, ITTO Secretariat; tel: +81-45-223-1110; fax: +81-45-223-1111; e-mail: itto@itto.or.jp; Internet: <http://www.itto.or.jp>

FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: CSD-15 will take place at UN headquarters in New York from 30 April - 11 May 2007. CSD-15 will be a "policy year" to decide on measures to speed up implementation and mobilize action to overcome obstacles and constraints for implementation of actions and goals on energy for development, air pollution/atmosphere, climate change and industrial development. For more information, contact: UN Division for Sustainable Development; tel: +1-212-963-8102; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: dsd@un.org; Internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev>

TWELFTH SESSION OF THE AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON THE

ENVIRONMENT: AMCEN-12 will be hosted by South Africa; date and venue to be confirmed. For more information, contact the AMCEN secretariat; tel: +254-20-624287/9; fax: +254-20-623928; e-mail: amcensec@unep.org; Internet: http://www.unep.org/roa/Related_Programmes/AMCEN/index.asp

SECOND PARLIAMENTARIANS CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CENTRAL AFRICAN FOREST ECOSYSTEMS: The Second Parliamentarians Conference on the Sustainable Management of Central African Forest Ecosystems will be held in Equatorial Guinea in 2008, dates to be confirmed. For more information, contact: World Bank regional office; tel: +237-220-3815; fax: +237-221-0722; e-mail: Gbowen@worldbank.org; Internet: <http://www.repar-ac.org>

GLOSSARY

AFLEG	African Forest Law Enforcement and Governance
AMCEN	African Ministerial Conference on the Environment
CBFP	Congo Basin Forest Partnership
CEFDHAC	Conference on Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems
CIFOR	Center for International Forestry Research
COMIFAC	Central African Forest Commission
FLEG	Forest Law Enforcement and Governance
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NTFP	Non-timber forest product
ICRAF	World Agroforestry Center
REFADD	African Women's Network for Sustainable Development
REPAR	Network of Parliamentarians for the Sustainable Management of Central African Forests