



water & forestry

Department:
Water Affairs and Forestry
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Swiss Confederation

Federal Office for the Environment FOEN

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS

Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF)

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry, with its headquarters in Pretoria, South Africa, is the custodian of South Africa's water and forestry resources. It is primarily responsible for the formulation and implementation of policy governing these two sectors. While striving to ensure that all South Africans gain access to clean water and safe sanitation, the water sector also promotes effective and efficient water resources management to ensure sustainable economic and social development. The forestry programme's main objectives are to ensure the sustainable management of all types of forests and to enhance the contribution of forests resources to social and economic development.

Federal Office for the Environment, FOEN

The Federal Office for the Environment is the Swiss government's centre of the environmental expertise. It is responsible for forest issues and has been co-organising the UNFF Interlaken Workshop on Decentralization in Forestry, 2004.

Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), headquartered in Bogor, Indonesia, is a leading international forestry research organization established in 1993 in response to global concerns about social, environmental, and economic consequences of forest loss and degradation. One of the 15 members of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, CIFOR is dedicated to advancing human well-being, environmental conservation and equity by conducting research to inform policies and practices that affect forests in developing countries.

Intercooperation

Intercooperation is a leading Swiss NGO engaged in development and international cooperation. Intercooperation is a resource and knowledge organization, combining a professional approach with social commitments. Intercooperation's expertise, process competence and services are grouped around three principal working domains: natural resource management, rural economy, and local governance and civil society. Intercooperation supports partner organizations in more than twenty development and transition countries.

Department for International Development (DFID)

The Department for International Development (DFID) is the part of the UK Government that manages Britain's aid to poor countries and works to get rid of extreme poverty. It is headed by a Cabinet minister, one of the senior ministers in the Government. It has two headquarters (in London and East Kilbride, near Glasgow) and 64 offices overseas and also have over 2500 staff, almost half of whom work abroad.

United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

In October 2000, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) established the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), a subsidiary body with the main objective to promote management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The UNFF is guided by a Bureau and serviced by a compact secretariat, which also serves as a secretariat for the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. The secretariat of UNFF is found at One United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017 USA.

International Workshop on Forest Governance and Decentralization in Africa:

A Country-led Initiative in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

8 - 11 April 2008 Durban, South Africa





BACKGROUND

The decade of the 1990s saw the rebirth of democracy in some parts of Africa, and with it the initiation of different governance reform initiatives, notably processes of administrative and political decentralization. Many countries embarked on decentralization in response to demands for better management of natural resources, including forests, and for more equitable sharing of benefits derived from them. Forest governance reform and decentralization in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have taken various forms and are proceeding at different paces and stages of implementation.

In 2004, the Interlaken Workshop on Forest Governance in Federal Systems provided high-level decision makers and other key stakeholders the opportunity to share global experiences with decentralization in the broader context of governance reform. The participants of the Interlaken meeting recognized the importance of appropriate sharing of decision-making authority and responsibility for forest management between different levels of government. Other crucial requirements identified included more effective enforcement of accountability at all levels of government and appropriate and strong linkages with other sectors and non-forestry agencies.

In Africa, a host of organizations, initiatives and policy instruments suggest an ongoing commitment to the principles and strategies of democratic decentralization. Meetings of the African Union, the Partnership for Municipal Development, Africities, Réseau Réussir la Décentralization, Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, Conference on Ecosystems of the Dense and Wet Forests of Central Africa and regional authorities such as COMIFAC, SADC, EAC and ECOWAS continue to reaffirm commitment to improved governance and to actively address the challenges of decentralized natural resource management. The Kigali Declaration on Leadership Capacity Building for Decentralized Governance and Poverty Reduction in SSA, widespread participation in a host of international treaties, the promulgation of new forestry laws at national level and trends in donor funding echo this trend.

While policy reforms and this ongoing support have created real opportunities, putting democratic decentralization into practice for more equitable distribution of benefits and more sustainable forest management continues to be a challenge. Absence of a framework to capitalize assets under decentralized management and mechanisms to track progress and exchange lessons to inform action often undermine gains. In many countries, inadequate technical competencies, funding and incentives constrain effective implementation on the ground. Protected area conservation and landscape management approaches which are premised on large-scale (ecoregional), state-managed, command-and-control approaches also often run counter to decentralized resource governance. Conflict can make decentralization and governance reform particularly challenging. Increased trade, investment and financial flows into and out of Africa also add a layer of complexity to the implementation of decentralization and governance reforms. These issues and challenges are likely to take even greater significance in the context of current discussions on reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation in the international climate change debate.

It is time to take stock of challenges faced in implementing lessons and recommendations from previous workshops, and to synthesize Africa's unique experiences in forest governance and decentralization. This will help in identifying the features of more promising systems of forest governance, and support African decision-makers at diverse levels to better leverage governance transitions for the benefit of forest communities and society at large.

OBJECTIVES

The Workshop on Forest Governance and Decentralization in Africa will bring together diverse stakeholders, policy makers and international experts to share experiences and explore opportunities for generating concrete gains from governance reforms and decentralized forest management. This initiative in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests will provide a platform for learning lessons from diverse international and national processes. It will also facilitate the expression of voices of stakeholders at different levels and experience sharing, especially of local people in their struggle to manage locally important resources that are, at the same time, of global interest. As local perspectives also enrich international discussions, the workshop aims to strengthen local involvement in the regional and global dialogue on forests.

The specific objectives of the workshop are:

- To distill and share lessons learned from experiences of African countries, including from regional initiatives, in their implementation of decentralization and broader governance reforms in the forest sector;
- To facilitate broader, shared understanding of key trends and issues and sharing of lessons and workable approaches, especially as they relate to poverty reduction and sustainable forest management, including forest conservation;
- To strengthen cooperation and to enhance partnerships among countries and key stakeholders in addressing common challenges; and
- To recommend approaches for strengthening policies, institutions and practices of decentralized forest governance systems to reduce the gap between theory and practice.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Common understanding of the concepts and implementation of decentralization in the general context of forest governance in Africa and their links to selected workshop themes;
- Identified opportunities for coordinated policy responses, capacity building and implementation of best practices;
- Identified instruments for improved decentralization to the local level; and
- Identified strategies for overcoming constraints to effective decentralization and sustainable management of Africa's forests at regional, national, sub-national and local levels.

As a Country-led Initiative in support of the UNFF, the workshop is expected to also result in the following process-related outcomes, with particular reference to decentralization and forest governance reform:

- Contribute to the regionalization of UNFF in Africa; and
- Provide input (ideas) to the UNFF process and widely disseminate workshop results.

VENUE AND TIMING

The workshop will be held from 8-11 April 2008 at the International Conference Center in Durban, South Africa.

WORKSHOP PROGRAM AND THEMES

The workshop will consist of presentations, panel discussions, working groups and field visits focused on the following major themes:

Decentralized Forest Management and Livelihoods

- Decentralization, land reform, tenure and customary institutions
- Impact of decentralization on livelihoods
- Institutional design, equity and transfers of power for economically-important resources

Conservation, Sustainable Forest Management and Forest Governance

- Reconciling biodiversity conservation and environmental service protection with decentralized decision-making
- Means of implementing sustainable forest management
- Strengthening the linkage between livelihoods and sustainable forest management

International Trade, Finance and Forest Sector Governance Reform

- Forest sector governance reform
- International trade, investment and forest governance
- International transfer payments and compensation schemes

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Participants will include representatives of local, sub-national and national governments, community organizations, civil society and international agencies.