

**“DRAFT COUNTRY REPORT FOR THE PREPARATION OF A  
CONVERGENCE PLAN FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND  
SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE WEST AFRICAN FOREST ECO-  
SYSTEM”**

## **Introduction**

This country report is the result of study conducted through solicitation of cross-sectional views from stakeholders, government Institutions, NGOs and partners on the Preparation of a Convergence Plan for the Management and Sustainable use of the Forest Ecosystem in West Africa.

The Intent of this report is to unfold major cardinal information given by stakeholders as their own way of contributing to the preparation of a sub-regional convergence plan that will provide a unifying framework in the spirit of harmonizing all member states in committing themselves to the enhancement and sustainable use of our forest ecosystem within West Africa; Hence, the preparation of this convergence plan will serve as a medium in giving the sub-region a voice on the sustainable use and management of our forest ecosystem with respect to the forest dialogue process.

### **Background:**

The Forest Dialogue process of West Africa in conjunction with the sub region inter tropical Biomass is characterized by diverse forest ecosystems that interplay a collaborative medium in the conservation of the sub-regional biodiversity; the ecosystems are undoubtedly the major source of export of timber and non-timber forest products, woody energy, services works that unanimously contribute to the improvement of food security, human nutrients and health that target the estimated 253 million inhabitants of the sub-region.

Statistically, the sub-region covers approximately about 72 million hectares that is about 15% of the overall land area of the fifteen (15) member states put together in the context of inescapable climate change that strongly affect the ecosystems of the sub-region with respect to the abusive practices of woods and non-wood forest products exploitation and the devastating effects of itinerant agricultural practices that result in the minimum annual loss of 1,200,000 hectares of forest representing a current loss rate around 1.7 % with the turnout reductions in biodiversity.

Notwithstanding, the ultimate general objective of convergence plan of the West African forest Dialogue process is to pool initiatives for a concerted effort in the sustainable management of west Africa's Forest Ecosystem. The plan is being initiated to endow the south region with an umbrella framework for the sustainable management of the forest ecosystem. With FAO technical and financial assistance, a base line document was formed and later validated in Accra, Ghana in January

2009 to endow the sub region with a strategic framework for the management and sustainable use of the forest ecosystem.

The convergence plan as stipulated will incorporate sub-regional actions and the summation of special national action together with each member state program proposal for achieving the objective of convergence and integration in terms of Sub-regional Corporation in forest resource management as defined in the comprehensive research documentary on the forest dialogue process. This indeed involves the development of this plan that will purposely engage their national and regional actions with a view to sustainably manage and develop the forest ecosystem in the context of regional dialogue with all stakeholders on the management and sustainable use of the forest ecosystem.

Importantly, the forest ecosystem of Liberia is very rich in terms of biodiversity but the high-risk of vulnerability of forest due to pressure from the forest dwellers and other illegal forest intruders have intensely caused a great menace and exploitation to the forest and its ecosystem.

The most recent study of Liberia's forest estate (2004) indicates that the forest cover is approximately 4.52 million hectares of tropical rain fall, which is 42% of the remaining portion of the upper Guinea forest ecosystem and is higher than any other of the seven countries sharing this forest ecosystem (see page 26 ).

There has been a lot to do in the conservation process of our forest sector; maintaining and coordinating our cultural heritage through the preservation of our biodiversity.

Since 1971, Liberia, through the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) had Promulgated Laws, rules and regulations to cordially govern and effectively manage the forest in a sustainable way for the general preservation of our biodiversity/forest ecosystem.

Notwithstanding, our people depend on the forest for their sustainability. The government of the republic of Liberia, through the FDA, is engaged in multilateral relations with the republic of Sierra Leone, Guinea and La Cote' D'ivoire for the formulation of memorandum of understanding/agreements for the sustainable management of the forest ecosystems that they shared in common.

Toward this end, a National Consultative workshop was held in Monrovia (April 18 & 19 2011) that brought together cross-section of stakeholders in discussing issues as they relate to the preparation of a Sub-regional convergence plan.

During this period, participants of the workshop where group into two sessions with specific issues to be discussed as stipulated below:

#### Group I

Group one discussed the main problems of landscape management/forest ecosystems and agro-forestry, including those involving cross border implications or sub-regional effects on trans-boundaries areas.

Consequently, they advanced proposal of actions to be undertaken at national and sub-regional level to curtail those problems facing the region.

#### Group II

Basically, Group Two Identified specific constraints on forest governance in terms of (institutional framework, policies and strategies, legislations, resource mobilization) and the constraints or the bottleneck for collaborative management of forest and wide life at the national level and its links and contributions to cross-border dimension or sub-regional level.

Group two also made a proposal of actions to be undertaken at national and sub-regional levels.

In summary, the both groups work was summarized indicating the issues discussed, the problems identified and recommended solutions for targeting same. See table 1.1 below.

Similarly, the below are some fundamental issues that were addressed during the National study, documentary review and exchanges with partners:

- The physical elements and socio-economic situation.
- Major problems of forest and agro-forest space/ecosystem, including those problems having trans-boundary or sub-regional implications.
- Current state of the forest and agro-forest space/ ecosystem
- Forest governance in terms of (institutional framework, policies and strategies, legislation and resource mobilization).
- Recommendations for concerted national level management of the forest and its fauna with contribution given to the components with transboundary or sub-regional dimension.
- Share and/or transboundary natural resource management projects/programs.

### **Physical Elements and Socio-economic situation:**

Technically, deforestation and forest degradation are among the major physical elements of concern as regard the conservation of the forest ecosystem; this condition is been exacerbated by shifting cultivation and pressure due to human settlements and the establishment of large plantations by means of clearing the forest. The removal of forest cover affects climate change, soil erosion and increased sun shine with excessive rainfall. These activities give rise to climate change due to the exposure of the soil and large water body of a given forest area.

The destruction of Forest in favor of the establishment of a tree crop plantation creates a very serious problem for our biodiversity; this has caused a major problem for community dwellers and the ecosystem in general. Because of the existence of these physical elements, our biodiversity is threatened and may cause a devastating menace to our forest and Agro-space /ecosystem.

Additionally, massive hunting and mining which are among those problems of socio-economic concern have intensely degraded our forest biodiversity. The government of Liberia, through the FDA has promulgated rules and regulations to maintain and subsequently conserve our forest through some strategically focused law enforcement measures.

Holistically, ultimate priority of concern has been placed on illicit intruders that consciously deplete the forest and fauna for their economic gain thereby gradually destroying our biodiversity.

In consideration of these issues there is a need for the establishment of an alternative measure by the forest governance bodies to regulate the usage of the forest by the provision of Schools, Clinics, Sanitation facilities and micro-loans for the communities in the affected areas.

## **Major Problems of Forest and agro-forest space/ecosystem**

Our forest and agro-forest space as it has been noted is characterized by a high level of vulnerability thereby causing a maximum risk to our forest and forest space/ecosystem; the allocation of large area of land as protected area causes grave concern to the affected communities because it deprives them of using the forests for their livelihood.

The lack of land use policy which results in the deforestation and forest degradation has caused a travailing effect in our agro-forest space/ecosystem through shifting cultivation and pressure from human settlements and establishment of oil palm plantations which exposes the soil and contribute to climate change.

Forest and Agro-forestry have been of much significant to the conservation processes of our forest ecosystem with emphasis been placed on Agro-forestry management and the provision of alternative means for the affected communities. We do believe that this will reduce pressure on the forest ecosystem thereby affording us the opportunity to Collaborate efforts amongst countries with transboundary activities in regulating the activities of miners and hunters in protected area.

### **Current State of the Forest and Agro-forest Space:**

Liberia is situated within the tropical rainforest belt on the West Coast of Africa with the total land area of about 9.58 million hectares. The total forest area is about 4.52 million hectares or 45% of the land area. In recent years, the forest area has decreased largely due to uncontrolled logging and an expansion of land used for agriculture. The annual rate of deforestation is currently estimated at about 12,000 hectares (0.3 percent), while the total recorded establishment of new forest plantations to date has amounted to only about 11,000 hectares.

Liberia, besides its small size, contains a significant amount of biodiversity, including: OVER 2,900 different vascular plants ( including



225 tree species); 600 birds species; 150 mammal species; and 75 reptile species. In addition, Liberia accounts for the largest remaining (42 percent) of the Upper Guinea forest of West Africa. Liberia's forests also produce a wide range of other environmental goods and services that benefit Liberia and the rest of the World. About 60 tree species have been harvested and 3 exported from Liberia in the past; however, only a few of these species account for the majority of production. For example, in 1998, Niangon (*Heritiera utilis*) accounted for approximately 50 percent of industrial round wood production. The threats to these biological resources that have been evolving over the past years are becoming much serious as uncontrolled and a rather imprudent exploitation of both the flora and fauna is relentlessly reducing these natural resources base at alarming rates that might eventually result in irreparable loss; if the appropriate measures are not put into place.

Out of the total resources, 3.9 million hectares are arable land. However, shifting cultivation, exploitation by logging, charcoal and firewood production are threatening the ecosystem, by accelerating soil erosion, weakening natural controls of water flow and exacerbating floods. The intense pressure that are brought to bear on the country's biodiversity stems from over harvesting by extractive industries such as logging, alluvial gold and diamond mining, large scale commercial hunting, fishing, and charcoal production as well as shifting cultivation. Unplanned settlement of war affected displaced populations has become additional key factor in the loss of biodiversity, due to over-harvesting of fuel woods and hunting by settlers.

Although regulations for forest management in Liberia are based on sound scientific and legal principles, enforcement is weak Due to inadequate train man power which enhancing evasive means that are often employed by some users to thwart the set of sustainable uses of the forest resources.

**Forest Governance Process taking into consideration the following:**

- a. Institutional Framework,
- b. Policies and Strategies,
- c. Legislation and Resource Mobilization.

The Government of Liberia through its regulatory institution, the FDA, recently carry-out the forestry reform process which resulted into a forestry instrument referred to as the NATIONAL FOREST REFORM LAW OF 2006. Imbedded in this document are policies, rules and regulations intended to manage the Liberian forest resources sustainably. Its main area of concentration is to sustainably manage the forest on a three C's concept: commercial, conservation, and community.

**Commercial:**

As regard the commercial aspect, forest management contracts are awarded to concessionaires through a public bidding system. Additionally, several regulatory framework including the ten core regulations the code of forest harvesting practices have been promulgated to assist in the management of the forest and its ecosystem.

**Community:**

Community empowerment and participation are encouraged at all levels in the forest governance process. In addition to the management contract signed between the government and the companies, social agreements are also signed between the affected communities within the given forest area and the contract holder. Additionally, the community rights Law of 2009 with respect to forest lands has been enacted to provide the various community the opportunity to participate in the forest governance process.

**Conservation:**

Conservation aspects centered on the establishment of selected protected areas of importance to the conservation of biodiversity. The Forest Reform Law of 2006 has mandated the FDA to set aside 30% of the forest area to be used for the establishment of protected areas.

Protected area selection was defined during an international multi-stakeholders workshop held in August 2007 based on a number of criteria including species diversity, threats, data availability, community involvement, endanger species, funding, connectivity, population density, uniqueness, land use security, management framework, geographical, contributing to environment, partnership, and size of area. **Ten Protected** areas were selected for the creation of the protected areas network and three were prioritized for initial establishment. The result of this workshop suggested that the best suited areas to start protection were **Lake Piso, Gola Forest and Wonegizi forest.**

#### **Lake Piso:**

Lake Piso Proposed protected area amounts to 48,593 hectares of rich biodiversity which includes migratory birds' species, sea turtles, hippos, manatees, primates, fish species and medicinal plants. Unlike other proposed Protected Areas, Lake Piso has such a variety of habitats and ecosystems such as costal, marines, forest, mangrove, brackish water, island, freshwater habitats. The main opportunities are (a) very unique marine biodiversity and mangroves breeding ground for important marine's species ;(b) enough baseline data for establishing a Protected Area ; and (c) potential for funding from tourism, research and fishery sectors as well as high interest for investment in area including some private US funds. The main threats are deforestation of mangroves, unregulated fishing, hunting, farming and settlements, on hills, high population due to the presence of a town and the vicinity of Monrovia, poor development, erosion of dunes (sand mining) and offshore mining for oil.

#### **The Gola forest,**

This proposed protected area is about 97,975 hectares and is endowed with significant biodiversity richness (endemic amphibians, elephants, hippos, birds, plants, etc.) and a number of unique habitats such as forests, gallery forest, swamp forest and farm bushes. The most evident opportunities include: (a) good funding potential based on charismatic fauna (elephants, hippos) transboundary conservation potential, security of border areas and eco-tourism potential; (b) lessons learned from Gola in Sierra Leone in terms of management experience, biological data, community exchanges and fund raising experience; (c) potential effectiveness of transboundary/peace park management leading to coordinated response to threats; and (d) being regarded as a hotspot in the upper Guinea Forest. The main threats include (a) the possibility for forest concession to be reinstated; (b) diverse land uses such as hunting, mining, logging, farming, and transboundary migration of people from Sierra Leone; lack of FDA capacity in the area/site.

However, this area was formally launched, May 18<sup>th</sup> 2009 in Kenema, Sierra Leone by the presidents of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Republic of Liberia, His Excellency Ernest Bah Koroma and Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf respectfully. This project cost about 4.3 million Euro which is intended for the establishment of a wildlife corridor and National Parks with the exception of management and administrative costs which are to be borne by the respective governments. For the implementation of this project, each country is to identify two partners to manage the area. In the case of Liberia, the **FDA** and **SCNL** were selected. SCNL will engage the community by carrying out awareness while **FDA** will conduct socio-economic and biophysical studies. Similarly, the conservation body of Sierra Leone and an NGO will carry similar activities within Sierra Leone.

Through the **GEF** program which is funded by the European Union and Bird Life International, the Forestry Development Authority has begun research on socio-economic and biophysical information prior to the establishment of a National Park in Liberia.

**The Wonegizi Forest:**

This Protected area is about 28,894 hectares which is rich in biodiversity that includes chimps and other primates (endanger), elephants, pygmy hippo (flagship spp for Liberia). Wonegizi is a unique habitat (IBA) for Picathartes (rock fowl). Conservation opportunities include (a) steepness of slope as a disincentive for farming, (b) funding from IUCN, Birdlife, USAID MIKE, KFW ,CEPF, FDA and Great Apes ; (c) research attention;(d) ecotourism potential (species, culture, scenery ); (e) extension of Guinea Forest (500,000 ha only); (f) corridor (Wologizi) into Guinea; (g) transboundary nature ( Peace Park); and (h)scattered farming communities offer opportunity for integrating community land use practices in PA management ( e.g. buffer zones). Most Important threats include (a) mining for iron ore with the possibility of the extension of the Wologizi despite retailing possible erosion and contamination of water bodies;(b) returning of refugee that could increase population density and result in land use change (farming expansion) especially in the next five years; (c) legal and illegal; (d) commercial hunting;(e) potential fires of savannah grass.

**Governance Platform for the management of Nimba Mountain**

This project is supported by Darwin Initiative and implemented by Fiona and Flora International in coo liberation with the Forestry Development Authority. There is an ongoing process of reaching an agreement in order to sustainably manage the Nimba Mountain in a manner that does not threaten the ecosystem. It is expected that three countries, Liberia, Guinea and the Ivory Coast will sign an agreement involving all stakeholders to include farmers, miners, and hunters for the sustainable management of the area.

The mile stone of this platform is that it is inculcated in the Mano River Union initiative on Environmental protection.

### **Tabular analysis chart of major issues, problems and attending Recommendations/solutions**

In view of the current threats to our biodiversity and possible dire consequences on the environment, the following as stipulated in the proceeding chart are issues, major problems and the recommended solutions for engendering within the preparation of the convergence plan of the West African Forest Dialogue process:

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Major Problems</b>	<b>Solutions/Recommendations</b>
The physical elements and socio-economic situation.	<p>The destruction of Forest in favor of plantation crops.</p> <p>Human settlement</p> <p>Deforestation/forest degradation</p> <p>Infrastructural Development</p>	<p>The combination of tree crops (e.g. cash crops) along with arable crops that will greatly minimize the problem of deforestation and attendant biodiversity imbalances, especially on fragile Trees and other animals related species.</p> <p>The introduction of re-forestation activities in reducing the effect of deforestation and forest degradation.</p> <p>The identification of alternative means to reduce the dependence of communities on the forest.</p> <p>The establishments of Fuel wood plantation that will provide fuel wood in greatly help the recuperative potential of deforested land to re-establish trees, rather than grassland.</p>
Major problems of forest and agro-forest space/ecosystem	<p>The lack of National land use policy</p> <p>Mining</p> <p>Unsustainable harvesting of wild life.</p> <p>Removal of forest cover and the establishment of plantation.</p>	<p>The introduction of appropriate policy measure for the effective management of the forest ecosystem.</p>

<p>Current state of the forest and agro-forest space/ecosystem</p>	<p>Inadequate availability of data on the forest ecosystem.</p>	<p>Established a share research data- base system in the regulation and sustainable management of the entire West African forest region.</p> <p>The provision of alternative means through the identification and development of non-timber forest product.</p>
<p>Forest governance</p>	<p>Bottleneck in the establishment of community forest.</p> <p>Inadequate enforcement of national legislations (Inadequate Forest Law Enforcement )</p> <p>Lack of adequate train human resource capacity</p> <p>Weak enforcement of regulatory framework</p> <p>Communication(language) barrier</p> <p>Poor information Dissemination</p> <p>Unclear tenure rights over natural resource.</p>	<p>Enforcement of legislation and sub-regional/international conventions.</p> <p>Conduct biophysical studies within the scope of the transboundary areas.</p> <p>Effective standardization of follow- period through promulgation of laws, rules or regulations.</p> <p>Conduct a multi stake holder’s workshop.</p> <p>Conduct frequent multi-stake holders’ consultative meetings. .</p> <p>Capacity building of stakeholders</p> <p>Awareness and education</p> <p>Harmonization of intersectorial benefit shearing mechanism.</p> <p>Development of legal frame work on tenure rights on natural resource.</p>

**Share and/or Transboundary Natural Resource Management Programs/Projects**


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Projects/Programs	Area Cover	Status	Funding Institution (s)
Gola forest region	Liberia and Sierra Leone	Being Established	Bird Life international, E.U. & USAID
Sapo Tile Grebo National park	Liberia and Ivory Coast	Being Established	Stewart Program, wild Japanese foundation, FDA and the European Union.
East Nimba Nature Reserve	Liberia ,Guinea and Ivory Coast	Established	USAID
Wonegizi (Ziama Forest Region)	Liberia and Guinea	Being established	Food & Agriculture Organization/World Bank?



**Participants/Stakeholders of the workshop and country study sessions:**

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**Issues of Concern by working group during the workshop Session:**

Participants broke out into two working groups with the following topics which actually seek to discuss problems and find Solutions follow by accompanying recommendations that will be used as tool to buttress the preparation of the convergence plan.

#### Group I

Group one discussed the main problems of landscape management/forest ecosystems and agro-forestry, including those involving cross border implications or sub-regional effects on Trans-boundaries areas.

Consequently, they advanced proposal of actions to be undertaken at national and sub-regional level to curtail those problems facing the region.

#### Group II

Basically, group two Identified specific constraints on forest governance in terms of (institutional framework, policies and strategies, legislations, resource mobilization) and the constraints and/or the bottleneck for collaborative management of forest and wide life at the national level and its links and contributions to cross-border dimension or sub-regional level. Group two also made a proposal of actions to be undertaken at national and sub-regional levels.

In summary the both groups work was summarized indicating the issues discussed, the problems identified and recommended solutions for targeting same. See attached table 1.1

Table 1.1

<b>SUMMARY OF WORKING GROUPS</b>			
<b>GROU P I</b>	<b>ISSUES</b>	<b>MAJOR PROBLEMS</b>	<b>MAJOR SOLUTIONS/ RECOMMANDATION S</b>
	<p><b>I. Land Scape management.</b></p> <p><b>II. Forest Ecosystems</b></p> <p><b>III. Agro-forestry</b></p>	<b>I. Absence of Land Use Policy</b>	<p><b>I. National Stakeholders participation in the Development and Enforcement of Land Use Policy</b></p> <p><b>II. Establishment of a National Dialogue with Robust Stakeholders, Workshop, group consultations, ect....</b></p>
<b>GROU P II</b>	<b>ISSUES</b>	<b>MAJOR PROBLEMS</b>	<b>MAJOR SOLUTIONS/ RECOMMANDATION S</b>

	<p><b>I. Forest Governance</b></p>	<p><b>I. Communication(language)</b></p> <p><b>II. Lack of Participatory Management.</b></p> <p><b>III. Inadequate Forest Law Enforcement</b></p> <p><b>IV. Poor Dissemination of Information</b></p> <p>❖ <b>V. Implementation of Benefit sharing mechanisms.</b></p> <p>❖ <b>VI. Unclear Tenure Rights over Natural Resource.</b></p>	<p><b>I. Build the capacity of stakeholders</b></p> <p><b>II. Awareness and education</b></p> <p><b>III. Harmonization of all existing inter-sectorial Benefit sharing Policies</b></p> <p><b>IV. Development of Legal Framework on Tenure Rights on Natural Resource</b></p> <p><b>V. Recommendations to National Consultant/Sub regional :</b></p> <p><b>Conduct In-depth Desk Study and Extensive Review of Existing Laws, policies and Instruments on Forest Governance</b></p>
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❖ **Regulatory frameworks are been established for appropriate handling.**

# The Forest Estate Hotspots of West Africa



References:  
Liberia Forest Re-assessment Project

*(Fauna and Flora International & Conservation International)*

National Forestry Policy and implementation strategy

*(Liberia Forest Initiative)*

National Forestry Reform Law of 2006 (*FDA*)