



Making the regional  
environmental policy  
an effective tool for governance and  
integration in West Africa



Central and West Africa Programme - PACO





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### A region increasingly aware of environmental issues ...

The United Nations System has initiated and facilitated large international processes that marked the environmental sector at the international level since 1972. (Box 1)

From 1972 to 2002, these large international environmentally-related processes have been mainstreamed in development policy and strategies of many countries in the African continent. In 1999, the drafting of the Sub Regional Action Programme to combat Desertification in West Africa and in Chad (PASR/WA) triggered stronger incorporation of the environmental dimension into development. There after, several regional environmental policies were developed and customized for the country level.

The most striking period in terms of policy development and adoption covers 2005 to 2011.

The 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and the international

Conventions that resulted from it (Climate Change, Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification) have established the frameworks for their implementation in which the West African sub region was deeply involved. The countries have ratified almost all major Conventions, and action programmes are being executed. Moreover, regional or sub regional plans of action or processes have been fostered on the themes of desertification control, biological diversity and biosafety in particular, ownership of the instruments of the Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

## Box 1:

# Chronology of international processes on the environment 1972 - 2002

- 1972 : first report of the Rome Club (Meadows Report) ;
- 1972 : conference on human environment in Stockholm, Sweden ;
- 1972 : conference on environment and development in Rio, Brazil ;
- 1982 : adoption of the World Conservation Charter ;
- 1983 : dialogues with in the framework of the Brundtland Commission ;
- 2000 : Millennium Declaration ;
- 2002 : World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa.

## ... who is bringing regional responses to global environmental challenges

West African countries are experiencing similar problems that go beyond borders: severe biological diversity loss, food insecurity, climate change and its effects, continuing land degradation and desertification, degradation of marine and coastal environments, international transportation of toxic and dangerous chemicals, biosafety, introduction of GMOs, etc.

The economies and populations of these countries highly depend on natural resources whereas adaptation strategies and economic alternatives are very limited. A common and shared vision of environmental issues would help to better defend the interests of the sub region at the continental and international levels. There are today nearly ten environmental policies and a wide range of regional legal instruments<sup>1</sup> for West Africa.

Regional policies have the advantage of adding value and of being a unifying framework. This approach allows consistent, complementary and harmonized implementation of policies and improved distribution of missions and roles among stakeholders. However, it appears that the implementation of regional solutions that were agreed on is being hindered and is not satisfactory.

<sup>1</sup> The 2003 Maputo Convention for example



## The Millennium Development Goals, Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Livelihoods

In 2000, the Millennium Initiative defined eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that should serve as benchmarks for national development plans to measure the progress accomplished. (Box 2)

For them to be relevant, regional environmental policies should be in line with these development stakes and aim at achieving these goals, specifically the sustainable development and poverty reduction-related goals. Poverty reduction is closely linked to the sound use of the environment at all levels (local, national and international). This is the

reason why the current discussions on the implementation of regional policies should look into a framework that would foster the sound use of resources, sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods.

## Box 2 :

# Recall of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

1. Extreme Poverty: Halving the proportion of persons living below the threshold of poverty and & hunger ; halving the population that suffers from malnutrition.
2. Universal primary education: Achieving universal primary education by 2015.
3. Gender Equality: Promoting gender equality and empowering women.
4. Maternal health: Reducing by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio by 2015.
5. Under-Five mortality: Reducing by 2/3 the mortality of under-five children by 2015.
6. HIV/AIDS and other diseases: stopping and reversing the trend towards the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria as well as other diseases.
7. Access to safe drinking water and protection of the environment: Halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and ensuring environmental sustainability by 2015.
8. Developing a global partnership for development.

## Consistency, complementarity and involvement of stakeholders

Although regional environmental policies and frameworks exist, these are not being smoothly implemented in West Africa. They are supposed to complement each other but these policies sometimes compete or even contradict one another. Even though they have as a common basis the same international commitments, there are sometimes discrepancies in terms of level of implementation or capacity among the countries (notably at the institutional, legislative, technical and financial levels) and on certain key issues (GMOs, environmental pollution, oil, toxic waste etc.) which makes it difficult to apply internationally or regionally agreed guiding principles.

Participatory and inclusive approaches that satisfactorily take account of all actors concerned, prerequisites (financing, institutional, evaluation) and the widest and more rational dissemination possible, contribute to the success of environmental policies. Yet,

in West Africa, the dissemination of regional environmental policies and access to information on the main actors (administrations and technical government departments, civil society organizations, universities and scientific research, communities) are limited.

Finally, adding to the above are some weaknesses in terms of technical assistance arrangements for parliamentarians and of civil society mobilization for the sharing of knowledge about regional policies and best practices in the area of environmental management. For more effectiveness, policies should be implemented in synergy involving the main actors in the drafting and implementation process.



# CHALLENGES



In West Africa, regional environmental policies have made great progress within a short time. Yet, they are often criticized for: their low level of implementation, unclear texts and documents, discrepancy with the local realities of the populations and States. Despite the major efforts made and the results obtained, countries are still having difficulty to materialize the policies and conventions, mainstream them harmoniously in a multisectoral approach and at all levels nationally. The current efforts and analyses should focus on identifying the challenges to be addressed and avenues for overcoming these hindrances.

## Articulation between the regional level and the national level

Most of the regional environmental policies are derived from treaties and international conventions and contribute to strengthening regional integration. In legal terms, community law is built upon public community policies and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA). Like the ECOWAS Environmental Policy, they can be deliberately aimed at reinforcing organizational

and institutional linkages. However, regional policies are often poorly integrated in the national legislation and despite consultations, the gaps in their alignment still persist. Such gaps make it often difficult to apply international or regional principles and undermine the capacity of some countries to respond to environmental issues. The absence of synergy and of incorporation of regional policies into national policies appears quite often among the weak links in regional options for dealing with environmental issues. The

same is observed in terms of consistency among these regional environmental policies with so many differences in socio-economic settings, in policy vision, methodology, involvement process of stakeholders and design.

➔ **The challenge:**  
How to articulate regional and national policies and legislations within a coherent strategy for sustainable development.



## Consistency and competition

Diverse structures related to the sectoral approaches used in the regional policies have been developed within the countries and among organizations. The diversity in the frameworks for actors involved leads to different policy visions, methods and models at the institutional level, making it more difficult to achieve regional integration or technical cooperation. The initiatives of many sub-regional institutions need to be efficiently coordinated so as to narrow the gaps among them.

Adding to this is the persisting sectoral vision of some regional environmental policies marked by the lack of rigor in the monitoring of guiding principles<sup>2</sup> of regional organizations. In many cases, national policies are just related to the regional level, which undermines regional environmental policies and makes it difficult to implement them on the field.

→ **The challenge:** Harmonizing the objectives of environmental policies developed by regional integration institutions while applying the guiding principles<sup>3</sup>, in order to build a consistent coordination and implementation strategy.

## Combining the global and sectoral scales

The still sectoral vision of major environmental issues remains a basic feature of regional policies. In a context of multiple priorities in the countries, regional policies should change and become inclusive in order to respond to the current concerns of poverty reduction and creation of sustainable livelihoods. The West African sub region and the Sahel have relevant environmental policies in general. They however need to widen their approach to be more embracing with assurances of sustainable natural resource use. Often, different measures and policies set targets in the three areas of climate, biodiversity

and desertification control. While many of the regional policies have incorporated at variable degrees the three dimensions of sustainable development, poverty reduction and MDGs, the response to these issues has not always been explicit and systematic with clear references but has instead come by coincidence.

→ **The challenge:** reconciling economic development and environmental conservation while incorporating the socio-economic development and poverty reduction dimensions into community-based environmental policies.

## Active participation of all stakeholders

Policies should be developed and implemented on the basis of social realities and with the involvement of populations as stakeholders. Discrepancies often stem from the absence of a link between the local and the regional levels.

In the implementation of regional policies in West Africa, interactions among the regional, national and local levels are weak. With the exception of few cases, the involvement of the main stakeholders in policy development and implementation process varies and remains generally inadequate. Key issues such as sustainable land management, the concerns of States, notably field realities, are not always taken into consideration in a systematic and rigorous manner because of the absence or weakness of the participatory process. The policies are often poorly known by some stakeholders like the national parliamentarians, civil society, communities whereas they could significantly impact the implementation of such policies.

→ **The challenge:** identifying interfaces for involving all stakeholders in the development and implementation of regional policies.

<sup>2 and 3</sup> Guiding principles: subsidiarity, proportionality, complementarity, regionalism, solidarity, consultation/participation, progressivity.

## Knowledge and capacity at the service of enhanced implementation

Adequate knowledge of certain natural resources or environmental issues is critical in designing good advocacy (cultural and natural heritage, environmental hazards, and shared resources). To achieve this, improved knowledge of regional environmental policies by parliamentary stakeholders, civil society and local communities is required. The performance of legal and institutional frameworks is critical for the mainstreaming of orientation laws and enforcement decrees on the operationalization of environmental policies. Capacity building for stakeholders would help to ensure a formally established and operational institutional mechanism for the implementation of policies. It would also help to fill the gap of weak ownership of technical and scientific tools for environmental evaluation.

➔ **The challenge:** supporting the training and information of these categories of stakeholders (parliamentarians, civil society and communities) to ensure the monitoring of effective implementation of community-based policies.





## SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENT

The reflection to be initiated for increased dynamism in the implementation of regional environmental policies should embrace multiple aspects and a wide range of stakeholders to be involved in this dynamics. Elements and reflections can be immediately noted from this step.

### **A participatory drafting process: the basis for any success**

A participatory and inclusive process should be promoted in order to give an impetus to the development process of regional environmental policies. This approach should involve all stakeholders in order to ensure

- ❶ a clear understanding of regional environmental policies ;
- ❷ the widest adherence possible of stakeholders in the development of such policies ;
- ❸ participation of all stakeholders in decision making ;
- ❹ sharing of experiences and the possibility to disseminate best practices derived from environmental projects and programmes ;
- ❺ coordination of stakeholders in the implementation phase.

## Environmental law: a critical instrument

The national law contributes to the implementation of international environmental conventions and regional environmental policies. The ratification of an international convention entails the obligation to take the required steps (legal and institutional) at the country level for the implementation of this convention. Also, the adoption and implementation of a regional environmental policy is supported by regulations, guidelines, standards and other decisions that are binding upon member States.

The States should take adequate measures so as to enhance environmental law and ensure its efficient enforcement as well. Environmental law is an essential instrument for the implementation of public policies at the country level and for promoting environmental protection.

Environmental law and environmental policy are closely interrelated because of the fact that the law determines the limitations in resource use and environmental standards. More focused attention by States and Inter governmental Organizations on environmental law will be an accelerating factor in the implementation of environmental policies.

## Adapted and sustainable resources and financial mechanisms

The results of the implementation of environmental policies will be visible only if the required financial resources are allocated as a matter of priority for actions towards environmental conservation and restoration and capacity building in stakeholders. To this effect, it is advisable that the States get involved primarily before the intervention of donors. Their efforts towards fund raising should be focused on the domestic level to seek stable and sustainable financial resources from national budgets, using an operational strategy backed by a national partnership platform. Externally, efforts should be directed towards the development of sub regional, regional and international financial mechanisms to support the implementation of environmental projects and programmes.

In addition, the States would gain by finding adequate means for improving access to financial resources through:

- 1 improved mastery of long term development programming processes that clearly include the environmental component,
- 2 enhanced practice of donor procedures and
- 3 implementation of studies on the economic benefits of environmental protection actions.

## Clear and shared implementation mechanisms

Key instruments for the implementation of environmental policies and plans of action make it possible to clearly identify the activities to be carried out and build synergy among stakeholders. Despite their importance and usefulness, such action plans are not adequately developed and /or monitoring. The added value of plans of action developed at the sub regional would be among other things :

- 1 providing practical and accessible responses to cross-border and sub regional issues ;
- 2 give to identified problems, solutions that foster regional integration ;
- 3 strengthen sub regional environmental awareness and cooperation capacity in terms of human resources, institutions and tools ;
- 4 bring sub-regional integration organizations closer to non State actors in the region and strengthen their visibility.

Successful examples of good practices exist in terms of policy implementation. They should be studied, published and widely shared.



## Improved communication in support of action

Regional environmental policies are not adequately known by the actors they are designed. They suffer from a wide communication gap. This lack of visibility and awareness hinders the ownership and effectiveness of the policies. The development process of a policy should be coupled with a dissemination mechanism that measures to the stakes and expected outcomes of the implementation of the policy. Supporting the policy with a communication strategy should help to:

- 1 widely disseminate the texts drafted and objectives set ;
- 2 Sensitize a wide range of stakeholders concerned by the policies and their implementation ;
- 3 Obtain the commitment and active support of stakeholders ;
- 4 Disseminate the results obtained and progress made.

## Measuring effectiveness: why and how ?

Indispensable for any environmental policy and programme, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) provides an on-going and consistent information flow on the trends in achievements from the various actions. It allows a regular monitoring in time and space of the effects and impacts produced. The architecture of a good monitoring and evaluation system should include the following :

- 1 determination of the level of monitoring and evaluation (inputs, activities, outcomes, effects/impacts) ;
- 2 definition of performance indicators ;
- 3 organization of monitoring and evaluation (stakeholders involved, roles and responsibilities) ;
- 4 information circuits (data collection, processing and analysis) ;
- 5 production of reports and dissemination of information (types, periodicity and report

addressees, distribution channels).

The strengthening of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms would create credibility in terms of management and facilitate funds mobilization for the implementation of projects and programmes.



## ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND OTHER REGIONAL LEGAL INSTRUMENTS

<b>NEPAD ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE FOR WEST AFRICA</b>	<i>Year of preparation</i> <b>2001</b>
<a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/initiative_enviennement_du_nepad.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/initiative_enviennement_du_nepad.pdf</a>	
It motivates and encourages initiative of sub-regional scope and supports the re-establishment of a safe and productive environment that can hold the ambitions of controlling the relentless resource degradation, food insecurity and poverty.	
<b>REVISED AFRICAN CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES</b>	<i>Year of preparation</i> <b>2003</b>
<a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/convention_africaine_revisee.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/convention_africaine_revisee.pdf</a>	
It aims at implementing development policies and programmes that are ecologically sound, economically adequate and socially acceptable. It provides an excellent framework for the implementation of the NEPAD Plan – at both continental and sub regional levels.	
<b>ECOWAS FOREST POLICY - FP</b>	<i>Year of preparation</i> <b>2005</b>
<a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/politique_forestiere_de_la_cedeao.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/politique_forestiere_de_la_cedeao.pdf</a>	
The general objective of this policy is to ensure the conservation and sustainable development of genetic, animal and plant resources, the restoration of degraded forest zones for the well-being of ECOWAS populations. The ECOWAS Forest Policy was built upon the 1992 Rio de Janeiro Conference conventions and agreements, the MDGs, the land tenure development system and national forestry policies.	
<b>REGIONAL POLICY ON ACCESS TO ENERGY SERVICES FOR RURAL AND PERI URBAN POPULATIONS FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS</b>	<i>Year of preparation</i> <b>2006</b>
<a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/livre_blanc_cedeao.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/livre_blanc_cedeao.pdf</a>	
It aims at increasing access to modern energy services and enabling by year 2015, at least half of the population to access modern energy services. In some cases, it has served as a basis for the design of national strategies and projects in the area of domestic/renewable energies.	
<b>WEST AFRICA REGIONAL POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPER - PRSP</b>	<i>Year of preparation</i> <b>2006</b>
<a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/strategie_reg_de_reduction_de_la_pauvrete_ao.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/strategie_reg_de_reduction_de_la_pauvrete_ao.pdf</a>	
As a complement to national PRSPs, it aims at better focusing regional programmes and increasing their benefits for the poor, improving their visibility and usefulness for the countries and making regional integration a genuine catalyst of poverty reduction in the sub region. The WA-PRSP is being implemented through the Regional Economic Programme (UEMOA) and the Priority Action Programme (ECOWAS).	
<b>ECOWAS DISASTER PREVENTION POLICY</b>	<i>Year of preparation</i> <b>2007</b>
<a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/politique_de_prevention_des_catastrophes_de_la_cedeao.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/politique_de_prevention_des_catastrophes_de_la_cedeao.pdf</a>	
It promotes the integration of the risk reduction dimension in ECOWAS member States' development policies, plans and programmes; and strengthens the contribution of disaster risk reduction to peace, security and sustainable development of the sub region. It has led to the setting up of a Humanitarian Emergency Relief Trust Fund within the ECOWAS Commission	



<b>UEMOA COMMON ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT POLICY - CEIP</b>	<i>Year of preparation</i> <b>2008</b>
<a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pcae_1.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pcae_1.pdf</a> <a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pcae_2.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pcae_2.pdf</a> <a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pcae_3.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pcae_3.pdf</a>	
<p>It aims at reversing the adverse trends towards the degradation and reduction of natural resources, environments and life quality in order to build a safe, easy to live in and productive environment in the sub region, thus improving the living conditions of the populations in the sub region.</p>	
<b>WEST AFRICA WATER RESOURCE POLICY</b>	<i>Year of preparation</i> <b>2008</b>
<a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/politique_des_ressources_en_eau_de_lafrrique_de_louest.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/politique_des_ressources_en_eau_de_lafrrique_de_louest.pdf</a>	
<p>It aims at contributing to poverty reduction and sustainable development by guiding the Community and its member states towards water resource management that combines economic development, social equity and environmental conservation.</p>	
<b>ECOWAS ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY - EP</b>	<i>Year of preparation</i> <b>2008</b>
<a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/politique_envirronnementale_de_la_cedeao.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/politique_envirronnementale_de_la_cedeao.pdf</a>	
<p>It aims at reversing the adverse trends towards the degradation and reduction of natural resources, environments and life quality, in order to ensure a safe, easy to live in and productive environment, thus improving the living conditions of the populations in the sub region.</p>	
<b>SUB REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN WEST AFRICA AND CHAD - WA 2/SRAP</b>	<i>Year of preparation</i> <b>2011</b>
<a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pasr2.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pasr2.pdf</a>	
<p>The general objective of this programme is to ensure food security, poverty reduction and sustainable development in West Africa and Chad. The programme is in its second phase (WA2/SRAP) and covers the 2011-2018 period. It is a unifying framework for controlling desertification, land degradation and drought and an operational tool for materializing the EP (ECOWAS) and the PCAE (UEMOA).</p>	
<b>SUB REGIONAL ACTION PROGRAMME ON VULNERABILITY REDUCTION IN WEST AFRICA - WA/SRAP-VR</b>	<i>Year of preparation</i> <b>2011</b>
<a href="http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pasr_rv_ao.pdf">http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pasr_rv_ao.pdf</a>	
<p>It aims at developing and strengthening the resilience and adaptation capacity in the sub region in order to cope with climate change and extreme climate phenomena. The WA /SRAP-VR deals with the roots of poverty and contributes to the achievements of MDGs 1 and 7.</p>	

## ▲ STAKEHOLDERS AND THEIR RESPECTIVE ROLES

The stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of regional environmental policies are multiple and have specific roles to play. They include inter governmental organizations in the sub region, State governments, civil society organizations, parliamentarians, private sector and development partners.

### REGIONAL INTER GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

**Design:** involvement of regional stakeholders ; selection of appropriate methodological approaches and steering of the design process.

**Implementation:** adoption of regional texts (guidelines, regulations, standards, common criteria of convergence) ; harmonization of environmental regulations and policies ; mobilization of financial resources ; setting up of governance bodies ; regular holding of regional statutory meetings ; coordination of the implementation ; promotion and facilitation of thematic networks and dialogue among stakeholders ; support to countries through regional projects and programmes and development of partnerships.

### STATES (political and administrative authorities, State technical departments, projects and programmes)

**Design:** involvement of State and non State stakeholders, inclusion of national priorities ; supply of monographs and national reports on the status of the environment during the design phase.

**Implementation:** domestication of regional policies; mainstreaming environmental policies into national poverty reduction strategies ; passing of laws and regulations or modification and customization of laws and regulations, mobilization of national budgets and external funds, establishment of national governance bodies, regular holding of national statutory body meetings, development and implementation of projects and programmes and promotion of dialogue among stakeholders.

### CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

**Design:** Effective participation in the processes ; analysis of proposed policies and feedback on proposed policies.

**Implementation:** Mobilization of financial resources ; implementation of environmental projects and programmes ; participation in statutory meetings of governance bodies ; establishment of partnerships with Government structures.

### PARLIAMENTARIANS

**Design:** mainstreaming of people's aspirations ; ensuring consistency and compliance with laws and community and international legal frameworks

**Implementation:** Adoption of environmental protection laws that are consistent with community policies and community law abiding ; control of government action and allocation of adequate funds for the efficient enforcement of environmental law

### TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL PARTNERS

**Design:** Methodological support ; contribution to the financing of the processes.

**Implementation:** Contribution to the financing from adequate financial resources and appropriate financing mechanisms ; technical support to States ; promotion of cooperation among partners.

## BENEFICIARIES

**Design:** Effective participation in the processes ; analysis of proposed policies ; feedback on proposed policies.

**Implementation:** Effective implementation of environmental projects and programmes on the field ; collaboration with the State, Intergovernmental Organizations, civil society organizations and technical and financial partners ; implementation of best practices; reduction of potential adverse effects of policies ; maximizing positive effects of policies.

## PRIVATE SECTOR

**Design:** Wide participation in the decision-making process.

**Implementation:** applying environmental standards in production modes and processes ; contribution to financing for environmental protection.

This information note on regional environmental policies is a summary of the «Study on regional environmental policies in West Africa: collection, analysis and reflection for a real implementation» sponsored by IUCN-PACO and developed by the consultant Mr. Issa Martin BIKIENGA which deserves our thanks for the work done.

This study was approved by the participants of the regional workshop «Regional environmental policies in West Africa: how to work together for a successful implementation?», that was held on 5 and 6 July 2012 in Ouagadougou.

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This note has been produced within the Poverty Reduction and Environmental Management Initiative - PREMI. This programme seeks to promote integrated natural resource management to reduce poverty and adapt to climate change in West Africa.

It aims at greater consistency in a wide range of activities developed by IUCN and its partners at local, national, and regional levels in West Africa. Through this programme, IUCN intends to strengthen the capacity of the region, demonstrate the importance of taking into account the value of ecosystem goods and services in regional development plans, policies and strategies to reduce poverty and adapt to climate change in a bid to improve wealth creation and economic growth.

The programme includes, among others, support for multi-actor dialogue on the most important regional development issues for the years to come. He puts environmental concerns and climate change at the centre of decision-making processes at national and regional level for sustainable development.



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