

## PROGRESS IN SUPPORTIVE INTERNATIONAL POLICY, AGREEMENTS AND PRACTICE

Discussion material paper on sub-theme “Review of national policies on drylands in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)”

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The global dialogue on tropical forests of 1980s, concretised in the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP), was largely inspired by the alarming deforestation in humid forests. The derivative processes aimed at sustainable management of forests such as those of the International Timber Trade Organization (ITTO) and the African Timber Organization (ATO), have also had a strong bias on humid forests. Indeed, it was not until the Rio Earth Summit (UNCED, 1992) that global policy dialogue on forests was broadened to focus on **all types of forests**. However, this broadened scope has not been fully recognized and addressed by foresters. Many foresters still consider woodlands and savannah vegetation to be the responsibility of other professional. How should we quickly internalise this broadened professional charge? How should foresters forge working linkages with wildlife management, and range management institutions for more effective management of dryland forests? What changes are needed in training and research institutions to accommodate this broadened responsibility?

International consensus on sustainable management of dryland forests is elaborated in chapter 11 of Agenda 21. Although attention on forests was a high in UNCED agenda, there is no specific international agreement. Subsequent international policy dialogue has been sustained in IPF, IFF and UNFF sessions. Taking off from IFF is a parallel international negotiation process fro countries with low forest cover (Iran process), which is of particular relevance to dryland forests. The problem is that many policy level players and foresters have not kept pace with these developments. How can we efficiently translate the relevant international policy consensus into country-level action plans?

Three agreements were negotiated at UNCED – Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 and subsequent CCD Conference of Parties have elaborated implementation strategies for CCD. However, CCD has no negotiated financial mechanism and, the reality is that most African countries lack the necessary resources and capacities to implement their National Action Plans (NAPs). How should the countries and the international community address this situation? CBD has its financial mechanism but dryland biodiversity is currently accorded relatively low priority. How can this be addressed at national and international levels? The financial arrangements under UNFCCC are still being negotiated. However, there are some early indications that dryland forests could benefit from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol. There is on-going debate and feasibility testing on how

this can be realized on the ground. How best can African countries and their institutions become engaged in the debate and feasibility testing?

One of the milestones in the UNCED/IPF/IFF/UNFF dialogue on forests is the need to set clear Criteria and Indicators (C&I) for sustainable forest management. In this connection ITTO, ATO and CIFOR have good attempts to develop C&I humid forests and partly for Miombo woodlands. In mid 1990s FAO and UNEP promoted and supported C&I process for drylands (Dry zone Africa process). However, this process has not been driven to its logical conclusion and needs reactivation. What should be done to reactivate this process? How best can the planned workshop come up with practical interventions?

I welcome comments on the issues above. Thank you.