



Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals

Secretariat provided by the United Nations Environment Programme



Abuja Declaration on Sustainable Land Use for People and Biodiversity including Migratory Birds in West Africa

On 24 – 25 November 2016, participants from governments¹, UN agencies², civil society³ and academia⁴ met to discuss the cross-cutting impacts of land use change on people and biodiversity in West Africa at a workshop on ‘Sustainable land use in West Africa: supporting national and international policy responses that deliver for people and migratory birds’ (‘the workshop’).

This workshop identified the key drivers of West African land use change of detriment to people and biodiversity, and identified priority practices and approaches for achieving sustainable land use of benefit to people and biodiversity, including migratory birds, using relevant policy frameworks.

Land use is changing rapidly across West Africa, and will continue to do so. Development in West Africa is a high priority for its people, but must not be done in a way that undermines their future livelihoods by compromising sustainability. A range of land use and cover changes are driving species declines, negatively affecting the provision of ecosystem services and reducing the ability of vulnerable people in the region to develop resilient livelihoods in the face of climate change. These include expansion and intensification of agricultural land use, loss and degradation of tree and forest cover, and declines in the extent, productivity and biodiversity of wetlands.

In September 2015, world governments agreed a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which create a universally applicable and indivisible framework of action for every country. All countries, UN organizations, Multilateral Environmental Agreements and development agencies are moving to align their work with the SDGs. Sustainable land use features most prominently under SDG 15, but will be a prerequisite for the delivery of most of the other goals, particularly in relation to West Africa.

In Africa, the African Union Agenda 2063 also sets out a broad vision for the region, including the goals of ‘environmentally sustainable and climate resilient economies and communities.’

Participants at the workshop used the following **definition of sustainable land use**:

‘Sustainable land management practices that, taken together over a defined area, support resilient livelihoods for communities, ecosystem services and sufficient natural and semi-

¹ Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal

² UNCCD, UNEP-CMS and FAO

³ BirdLife International

⁴ Institute of Avian Research, International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA), A.P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI), University of Barcelona and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)

natural habitat to ensure healthy populations of resident and migratory species. Such practices must also be adapted to climate change and take into account an integrated landscape approach to fulfil the needs of people and biodiversity.’

Participants acknowledged that:

- **The key underlying drivers of land use change** are: population growth (particularly of urban populations), economic growth (driven by both local and international market demand for commodities) and poor land governance.

- **The key harmful land use changes** that particularly threaten biodiversity, including migratory birds, the livelihoods of people and the ecosystem services that support life in West Africa are:
 1. Increases in large scale monoculture plantations
 2. Intensive farming techniques that degrade the natural environment
 3. Loss of trees, woodlands and forests in the landscape
 4. Loss and degradation of permanent and seasonal wetlands
 5. Damaging and poorly planned infrastructure developments, such as road and hydrodam construction
 6. Mining (including oil spills)

- **Examples of good sustainable land management practices** that can support people’s livelihoods, ecosystem services and biodiversity are:
 1. Participatory/integrated land use planning, governance and law enforcement
 2. Agroecological farming practices such as agroforestry, conservation agriculture, climate smart agriculture, integrated pest management and invasive species management
 3. Sustainable fuelwood and charcoal supply management; and
 4. Sustainable wetland management
 5. Deforestation-free sustainable supply chains
 6. Forest and landscape restoration
 7. Restoration of ecological connectivity.

- **Approaches that can support sustainable land use include:**
 1. engaging policy makers, local communities, civil society, scientists, experts and the private sector in development of sustainable land use governance, policy, regulation and programme formulation and implementation
 2. coordinating policy amongst different departments and stakeholders to ensure that sustainable land management practices that jointly deliver on multiple priorities are supported and advanced. In particular, developing participative, integrated land use planning
 3. providing positive incentives for sustainable land use and reducing perverse incentives, including through policy alignment

4. supporting evidence and understanding of the benefits of sustainable land use, including at the local level through improved extension and training services for farmers and land managers on sustainable land management practices
5. all of the above approaches must be supported by effective environmental governance

• **Countries should:**

1. ensure national policies, and their implementation, align with global level commitments, such as: the Aichi targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), land degradation neutrality targets under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Nationally Determined Contributions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Strategic Plan for Migratory Species and the Sustainable Development Goals, to achieve sustainable land management
2. ensure national policies, and their implementation, aligns with regional policies and commitments, such as the West African Regional Agricultural Investment Programme (ECOWAP 25), and the ECOWAS Convergence Plan for the Sustainable Management and Utilisation of Forest Ecosystems, to support sustainable management
3. Integrate sustainable land management practices and approaches (particularly around native tree restoration) that will support birds and people in West Africa into relevant frameworks and programmes, including in the delivery of Strategic Objective 2 of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's Reviewed Strategic Framework, and relevant restoration and afforestation programmes operating in West Africa e.g. the Great Green Wall Initiative, the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism and AFR100.
4. Integrate recognition of and support for sustainable land management into Pillar I of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
5. Integrate recognition of and support for sustainable land management into relevant programmes of the CBD, Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), UNCCD and UNFCCC, so that they can provide support, training and incentives for activity at the national level
6. Work with the CMS to develop guidelines for national common bird monitoring schemes, with a view to using wild bird indices as indicators of sustainable land use and ecosystem health.
7. Collaborate with the private sector to implement sustainable land use practices
8. Promote implementation of the African-Eurasian Migratory Landbirds Action Plan (AEMLAP)
9. Promote good land governance through the Voluntary Guidelines on Governance of Tenure (VGGT) and the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa (F&G)

Made in Abuja, Nigeria, on 25 November 2016

