

UNFF, AFF Meeting with Nigeria Governors

May 8, 2024 | 2pm

Room S-26MM3 | 26th floor of the UN Secretariat Building, New York

AGENDA

1. Welcome - Juliette Biao (UNFF, Director)
2. Introductions (each governor, all)
3. Opening remarks- (AFF)
4. Substantive Issues-
 - Brief update from each State governor
5. Discussion, Questions and answers-(Coordinated by AFF and open to all)
6. Next steps
7. Closing remarks by the UNFF.

ATTENDANCE

1. Dr Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, UNFF Director,
2. AFF Executive Secretary-CEO, Labode Popoola
3. M.A. Oyebo-Immediate Past Chair, AFF Governing Council
4. Larwanou Mahamane-Current Chair, AFF Governing Council
5. H.E. Abdulrazaq Abdulrahman Governor, Kwara State and Chairman, NGF (online)
6. H.E. Godwin Obaseki, Governor, Edo State
7. H.E. Dauda Lawal, Governor, Zamfara State
8. H.E. Dr. Agbu Kefas, Governor, Taraba State
9. H.E. Rt Hon. Ahmadu Fintiri, Governor, Adamawa State
10. H.E. Prof. Babagana Zulum, Governor, Borno State (09/05/2024)
11. H.E. Rt Hon. Peter Odey, Deputy Governor, Cross River State
12. Chiamaka Nnake, HC Budget and Environment
Representative of H.E. Governor, Anambra State (online)
13. Dr Akinyemi Akinyugha, SSA Climate Change & Economic Matters
Representative of H.E. Governor, Ekiti State (online)
14. Eghosa Omoigui, Head, Climate Change, NGF Secretariat
15. David Anyaegbu, Counsellor, 2nd Committee, UN Representative of Nigeria Mission

Meeting Notes

Director Biao of the UNFF welcomed the governors to the roundtable meeting holding at the sidelines of the UNFF19, and highlighted the importance to drive sustainable forest management and development on the continent of Africa and the role Nigeria can play in achieving the Global Forest Goals with the context of the SDGs. The United Nations Forum on Forest, UNFF implements their objectives through collaboration with the continent's forum, who in turn implements them at national levels.

In its remarks, the African Forum on Forests (AFF) noted that forestry is so low on the scale of national issues. And in most countries in Africa, it is not captured in national accounting and should be prioritized as a key to lift our citizens out of poverty. The AFF's purpose is to bring the continent at par with peers on global issues and achievement of the global forest goals, and expressed concern about the state of Nigeria' Forests, which have now become ungoverned spaces in spite of their potential to contribute to the country's sustainable development. The Forum stated its readiness to work with Nigeria to reclaim its past glory in the forestry sector. The AFF reiterated the commitment of the UNFF Director, and that the AFF looks forward to working with the states.

Update from the States:

1. Edo: The state in recent years has taken deliberate steps and action towards forest management by creating a Forestry commission and passed various forest laws. There is an ongoing initiative to develop 120,000 hectares of palm oil to support reforestation efforts, and this is in alignment with the state's strategic development plan. The state seeks collaboration and technical support to manage forests better and is in support for the collective establishment of a Forest Forum guided by the Africa Forest Forum as posited by the UNFF Director.
2. Zamfara: The issues of forest in the state border mainly on insecurity and banditry. And this is because of the solid minerals. Firewood has been the economic stay. The question remains, how can we sustain our forests without affecting the economic livelihood?
3. Taraba: The State has a total area of approximately 54,473 square kilometers (21,032 square miles), making it the third largest state in Nigeria in terms of land area. The State is bedeviled with climate change-induced challenges, ranging from deforestation, primarily driven by illegal logging, particularly of rosewood for exportation purposes, as well as for timber, desertification (due to grazing and bush burning), soil erosion, perennial flooding, solid waste disposal, water source depletion, decline in agriculture productivity and social conflicts. Taraba State has three major types of forest these include the Savannah Forest, High Rainforest and the Montane Forest. The Taraba Forest is not only rich in biodiversity but also a symbol of nature's resilience.

However, these forests are under threat from deforestation, climate change, and resource exploitation, and we must take decisive action to ensure its preservation for future generations.

His Excellency's administration has set up a masterplan to monitor the forests and is carrying out the following activities, Sustainable Forest Management Programs, which include the purchase of 720,000 assorted tree seedlings through the World bank's ACRReSAL project for planting at various Forest reserve. The State is also implementing legal frameworks and policies aimed to preserve and regulate the state's forests. Continuing the above practices, the State will move forward to empower local communities and invest in education of forest conservation as management of forests is our collective responsibility.

4. Adamawa: The state is the 8th largest land area in Nigeria with about 122,000 hectares of tree cover, equivalent to 3.6% of its land area and has 37 gazetted Forest reserves scattered across our 21 LGA which are shrinking due to numerous factors. The State has embarked on forest management activities and policies that include, ban on tree felling, supply of alternative cooking fuels, reforestation drives, and community-based conservation. In the next 3 years, the state seeks to implement the following initiatives: The introduction of Water Harvesting Measures through a massive 150,000-hectare irrigation, Promoting a green environment through embarking on the first capital city greening initiative in Nigeria, Revolutionizing access to Land and Land Security for agricultural use by the rural poor, Establishment of a briquette machine manufacturing plant in the state capital to ensure that there is a steady supply of alternative source of cooking fuel, Establishment of Forest Community Protection and Development Officers to complement the efforts of community leaders.

Although the state has been ravaged by several challenges, we have chosen to rise beyond these issues and lead the way in developing a green city, forest reclamation, and environmental protection and are here to seek strategic partnerships that will drive the green agenda and meet our goals with respect to the forests in Adamawa State and Nigeria in general.

5. Cross River: 18 years ago, the Cross River State government placed a ban on all logging activities. Prior to that time however, the state practiced sustainable forest management where for every one tree felled by operators, a deliberate policy was in place to ensure that 2 trees were replaced. During that time, communities enjoyed Royalties from those activities and so they cooperated with the government in protecting and preserving the forest. This action was incentivized by multilateral programmes such as REDD+ to engage in forest issues. However, that program failed to achieve the objectives for the forests as the state was waiting endlessly for the monies, nothing came, the local communities who relied heavily on the forest now began to fell the trees and sell. His Excellency Governor Prince Bassey Otu on resumption of office last year 2023, May, sat with his team to review the policy and we came to the conclusion that the best way forward for our forest was to

restore the sustainable forest management system that had worked well in the past, and is seriously committed to afforestation and Reforestation program. The state government plans to plant 3 Million trees, this is where we are seeking collaboration that is of strategic importance to Cross River State. Already the State Forestry Commission is partnering with FAO to plant 20 thousand trees, and the nursery is currently being developed by FORESTRY INSTITUTE OF NIGERIA (FIN). Also, the Forestry Commission is currently working with Adrayda who are regenerating 57,000 hectares of mangrove land in 5 LGAs in Cross River State.

6. Kwara: The 9th largest state in Nigeria by land size, it initially had 27 forest reserves but now reduced to 12 due to deforestation activities. HE noted that all states have similar challenges: felling of trees for feeding and economic activity. However, peculiar to Kwara State is the felling of Shea tree, which grows predominantly in Kwara, Kogi and Benue states. Nigeria produces 50% of the world demand for Shea. However, because of economic activities, these trees are cut down for cooking and to process the shea butter. The process of replacing this tree is 15 years. Therefore, we require strong technical and financial partners that will support us in forest management and capacity development of our institutions to enable us expand what we are already doing at the basic community level.
7. Ekiti: The state has undertaken significant reforms in the Forestry sector beginning with the revision of our Forest Law in 2016: moving away from the failing model of Government as the be-all and do-all, to a more sustainable and stakeholder-based model which works with the private sector and communities to rebuild our forests to their former glory. Ekiti State has prioritised reforestation using indigenous species through farmer-led initiatives with livelihood components, begun the joining process for the African Sustainable Commodities Initiative which provides a pathway to deforestation-free agriculture, is innovating a technology-led timber traceability project with an international NGO, taken concrete steps towards establishing Forestry Stewardship Certification for public/private plantations in collaboration with FSC Africa, established Ise Conservation Forest Area for chimpanzee conservation and designated ten new Community Protected Forests for eco-tourism. We also instituted state-level guidelines for participating in global voluntary carbon credits markets, so as to ensure that such projects are not only attractive but also fair, clear and transparent.
Our priority needs for the forestry sector include strengthening our forest protection and management systems through a private sector led, community-supported model, developing updated LULC maps and inventories of our forest reserves, and enabling investment in sustainable timber businesses and carbon market landscape restoration opportunities in Ekiti.
8. Borno: The State has been significantly impacted by the crisis of insecurity caused by the Boko Haram insurgency which has also exacerbated environmental degradation, including deforestation and loss of biodiversity in our major forest (Sambisa Forest) further exacerbating the vulnerabilities of our region. The shrinking of Lake Chad, once a vital

source of water and livelihood for millions of people in the region, has been a direct consequence of climate change and overexploitation of water resources.

In response to the challenges of deforestation and environmental degradation, Borno State has initiated various reforestation efforts aimed at restoring degraded landscapes, conserving biodiversity, and enhancing ecosystem resilience. These include tree-planting initiatives, restoration of degraded lands, promotion of sustainable land management practices and alternative energy sources for household use. Specifically, to save and revive the Sambisa Forest the state has embarked on the following initiatives. Community engagement in creating alternative livelihood opportunities to reduce pressure on the forest, Monitoring and evaluation, collaboration and partnerships with international organizations, donors, and research institutions to leverage technical expertise, financial support, and best practices in forest restoration. His Excellency proposes regional or cross-border conservation efforts especially between Cameroon and Nigeria as Sambisa Forest as well as other landscapes including Taraba Gashaka-Gumti, Cross River National Parks extend to Cameroon.

9. Anambra: The state aligns with what the governors said as it relates to challenges being faced in forestry management in Nigeria and the support areas proposed. However, the state has a peculiar issue. Anambra has the smallest landmass after Lagos, of which 35% of the landmass is encumbered by erosion and flooding, which are our major existential threats. The state currently has 8 major forests, accounting for 35,000 hectares, and the government is committed to maintaining them, but it is concerned about its sustainability due to the growing population amidst its subsisting environmental challenges. To manage the state's environmental challenges and sustain our biodiversity, the state has innovatively introduced some green initiatives such as: Tree planting, Introduction of green areas in infrastructure development, other green initiatives include cut one, plant two trees initiatives, one house two trees initiatives, etc.

The state needs partnership support to see most of these initiatives through, especially in the following areas: Technical assistance, Knowledge exchange, Research and policy support.

Feedback from AFF:

In response to the state of forests as presented by the subnational governments, the ES noted that issues of deforestation, encroachment and response started over two decades ago. In view of the parlous state of the forestry sector in Nigeria, he proposed the need for a deliberate and thorough review, starting with Nigeria hosting a Country-Led Initiative (CLI) that will address all the issues germane to working toward the achievement of sustainable forest management.

Next steps:

There is a need for further deliberation with UNFF through AFF on which issues should be prioritized and taken forward. However, the following are noted as actions to be taken immediately.

- There is a need to set up a technical Team to plan a CLI to be hosted by Nigeria early 2025. The technical team may need to meet in Abuja during the second quarter of the year. The Federal Government must be carried along in the planning process as the CLI is funded by the hosting country. The planning process will bring up all issues that will be discussed by experts during the CLI to develop a pathway towards sustainable forest management such as Forest, Peace and Security, Sustainable livelihoods and, resource assessment, private sector participation, investment in the sector, carbon trade and carbon markets among others.