



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Monday, 9 July – Wednesday, 18 July 2018
Conference Room 4, United Nations

Review of SDG 15 implementation

13 July 2018 from 10:00 to 13:00 AM
Conference Room 4
UN HQ New York

Talking Points:

SDG 15: *Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss (Life on Land)*

Short introduction of REFACOF:

- Created in May 2009 in Yaoundé, Cameroon
- Composed of 17 West and Central African countries and Madagascar
- REFACOF is **an advocacy platform** focused on African women's **tenure rights** in land and forest reforms
- Mission: Promote women's rights in Africa and advocate to shape policies and practices for gender equity in relation to land and forest tenure

Discussion questions

Q1: How can we change the narrative of how we approach SDG 15 to capture a more holistic accounting of the value of nature and its ecosystems, and what role can Governments play?

There is a growing recognition that :

- Achieving SDG 15 will also contribute very significantly to other SDGs such as climate change, food security, water, energy, gender equality, health, biodiversity, poverty, etc. as such, it is necessary to change the narrative towards a more holistic approach;
- The foundation of SDG 15 is Forests; As forests constitute a strong pillar for economic wellbeing, social inclusion and environmental sustainability;
- Deforestation and Forest degradation in the tropics are still going up; and to achieve the Paris agreement, halting deforestation and decreasing forests degradation should be in the agenda of all actors and stakeholders ;

- Land degradation neutrality is one of the accelerators of SDG15, as it can help reduce the burden of land degradation, desertification and drought borne by women and children;
- Gender-responsive approaches can contribute very significantly to achieve sustainability; as well Free, Prior and Informed Consent of indigenous peoples will guarantee their participation at all levels;
- Considering the value of ecosystems, it is essential that the human component be fully considered;

Based on this, to achieve SDG15:

- Local people must be empowered and involved: rural women, indigenous people, small holder farmers, boys and girls, etc. ; At the local level, we really don't need studies to help us understand how the various SDG's are integrated: *IT IS HOW WE EXPERIENCE THE WORLD, IT IS HOW WE LIVE OUR LIVES* ; (Peter De Marsh, Focal Point/Small Holder Farmer MG)
- As well, it is important to capture the benefits of the role of women and men brings to the achievement of to the value chain;
- There must be broad public awareness of and support for Sustainable Management of Forests; Urban populations ("city people", urban politicians, bureaucrats) are losing, or have lost an understanding of what is SFM, and how it is integrated with the other SDG's. And yet, their support will be essential to achieve SDG 15. They must understand how important SDG15 is to them;
- Achieving SDG 15 more holistically needs the development of capacities, enhanced synergies and partnerships:
 - o Cross sectors interventions;
 - o Strengthen stakeholder engagement, with emphasis on civil society, the youth, private sector, collaboration between policy-makers, investors and businesses;
 - o Multi-stakeholders dialogues and other participatory mechanisms for trust and consensus building, addressing challenges, resolving conflicts and achieving equitable resources management.
- To achieve SDG 15 it is essential to:
 - o Ensure security tenure to local and indigenous people and more specifically addressing rural and indigenous women's rights to lands, forests and forest-resources;
 - o Promoting deforestation-free supply chain.

At a more global/strategic level, changing the narrative also calls for :

- Promoting a bio-based economy, basing construction on wood, using wood fibres for a multitude of existing and new products;
- Therefore there is a need to stop using fossil fuels. And this also means that forests and other ecosystems will become even more important as resources for a multitude of goods and services for people.

The role of Governments:

- Promote responsible forest management recognizing the crucial role of ecosystem services and civil society participation on policy elaboration and implementation as well as the engagement of local and indigenous people, men and women; boys and girls.
- Ensure collaboration between different sectoral ministries and entities; enabling environment in terms of policies, laws and regulations; promote transparency, combat corruption and develop effective law enforcement mechanisms;
- Understand the relation between ecosystems and local communities, especially the culture that governs traditional management practices of, and rights to, forests and land;
- Address land tenure issues and secure the rights of rural women and indigenous peoples;
- Improve the quality and up-scaling of small-scale producers' initiatives and organizations that have proven to be effective in sustaining community livelihoods and natural resources management;
- Involve local and indigenous communities (men and women) in decision making for biodiversity conservation and strengthen the role of civil society organizations.

Q3: What are the evidence-based conservation solutions – including recent scientific and technological advances as well as effective community management and partnerships – that deliver genuine impact and can be scaled up or replicated for success?

- The landscape approach has shown a great potential for achieving sustainability at scale;
- Forest certification is an important tool;
- The Land Degradation Neutrality Fund is the first of its kind – it sets out to prove that sustainable land management can be profitable and deliver multiple benefits to society, including economic returns. It is a public-private fund where the public sector underwrites some of the risk to attract large-scale private investments in the land and their communities. It can be an innovative model to be replicated and can provide a vehicle for the increased commitment of private capital to land management and restoration;
- FSC has also developed a new procedure called “Ecosystem Services Procedure”; one of the added value of this is that, this procedure can be used by smallholders and communities, to attract financial support for their ecosystem protection and development activities;
- There are also many examples of successful community and smallholder forestry in many countries: outstanding examples: Guatemala, Kenya, Nepal, Cameroon, Gabon, The DRC, Sweden; in many of these examples, women’s full involvement and leadership has been essential to success ;

- The REDD+ process has been successful in bringing indigenous peoples, women and others stakeholders around the table because it mandated that Governments should bring them into the process.

Q4: Which are the most critical interlinkages with other goals and targets in terms of co-benefits or trade-offs? How can they be leveraged towards progress?

- As already said, SDG15 is linked to all the other SDG's, especially the ones noted above (SDG 1, SDG 2, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10, SDG 12 and SDG 13, etc.);
 - o the co-benefits are very broad, the trade-offs are small or non-existent when SFM is done well, with the active support and involvement of local people ;
- Investing in forests is contributing to most of the SDGs. Government action is crucial. Governments can promote SFM by fighting illegal logging, improving its national forest laws, but also by public procurement and by using fiscal instruments creating a level playing field for foresters that, for example, apply forest certification.
 - o This relates to SDG 12, which is promoting both sustainable production and consumption. Indeed, consumers, individuals, governments, companies, can give strong signals to the forest sector to go for sustainable forestry.
- Forest certification schemes, have also shown great credibility as valuable tools that need to get much more recognition and support;
 - o For example, FSC combines market mechanisms with balanced multi-stakeholder decision-making and absorbs essential environmental and social requirements;

Q5: Who are the furthest behind, and who is at risk of being left behind for this SDG?

- One of the ways of being behind that needs to be added is awareness of how INTEGRATED SFM works. In this respect, it is the “city people” who are falling behind.
- Given the lack of civil society engagement and lack of promotion of SFM, the deforestation and forest degradation trends, the lost of biodiversity, local poverty, the lack of rights and tenure insecurity, the forest dependent communities, rural women, indigenous peoples and the society as a whole in the tropics, are falling behind.

Some concluding elements:

I- On behalf of Women Major Group, we would want that:

- All initiatives undertaken to rehabilitate and restore degraded land, in the context of the SDGs, be gender sensitive and responsive to the heavy daily workload of rural women;
- Sharing and disseminating of best practices that can enable women to overcome the obstacles they face in obtaining land rights;
- Identifying policy incentives needed to strengthen women’s resilience to climate change; and
- Strengthening the voices of women land-users, forest-users and farmers, at all levels in policy processes.

II- Currently, deforestation and forest degradation is mostly happening in the tropics. This is the combined result of poor local governance, large-scale illegal logging, local poverty, and exploitation by large companies.

The Chair summary of the pre-HLPF on Forests highlighted that the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan on Forests 2017-2030 (UNSPF) provides a framework for transformational change.

The best practices and tools on forest-based solutions are available and need to be applied, replicated, and up-scaled by governments, the private sector and civil society to accelerate the progress in SDG15 and other SDGs.

But we need a major global action plan to halt deforestation in the tropics. This cannot be left to the local governments alone, even though they also have to take up their responsibilities and act.