



Launching the Africa Bio-Carbon Initiative

Highlights from the Official Side Event at CoP-14, Poznan, Poland

10 December 2008

The Africa Bio-Carbon Initiative was launched on the 10th of December in Poznan at the 14th Conference of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol by a grouping of 26 African countries in East and Southern Africa.¹ The Initiative advocates for a broader eligibility for bio-carbon in the Kyoto and related regional and national frameworks for climate change. This objective will contribute to the overarching goal of increasing the benefits for sustainable agriculture and land-use practices, biodiversity conservation, maintenance of environmental services, successful adaptation to climate change, and improvements in rural livelihoods, in addition to the delivery of cost-effective and verifiable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in Eastern and Southern Africa and beyond.

Speaking on the panel at the launch of the Initiative were:

- Mr Sindiso Ngwenya, Secretary General, Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
- Dr Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, Chief Executive Officer, Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN)
- The Honourable Rejoice Mabudafhasi, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, South Africa;
- Mr Agus Purnomo, Head of Indonesia's National Council on Climate Change;
- The Honourable Ligia de Doens, Minister of Environment for Panama;
- The Honourable Ambassador Blake of Antigua and Barbuda;
- Mr Kevin Hogan, Climate Change Representative for President Bharrat Jagdeo of Guyana;

¹ The grouping represents the member states of three Regional Economic Communities, Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), together with the East Africa and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). The 26 countries are Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, DR Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

- Senior official from the Australian Government;²
- Mr Brent Swallow, Principal Scientist. Leader of Global Project on Policy Options and Incentives, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)

The event was opened and facilitated by Dr Sibanda from FANRPAN. The keynote address was carried out by Mr Ngwenya. Please see annex 1 and 2 for their speeches.

In her remarks, the Honourable Rejoice Mabudafhasi, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, South Africa, came out as a staunch supporter of the Initiative. She highlighted that not only is Africa most vulnerable to climate change but there is a strong need to explore development-focused solution for adaptation with a particular focus of the role of women.

Mr Agus Purnomo from Indonesia's National Council on Climate Change congratulated the organisers of the Initiative for their vision and leadership. The Initiative is another example of Africa coming up with a strong vision and a clear work plan, similar to Nairobi Framework on Climate Change at the Conference of Parties in 2006, he said. Asia should follow Africa's example and learn to build bridges between the interests of its nations. With regard to the ongoing negotiations, he highlighted that they have often derailed good proposals such as the Africa Bio-Carbon Initiative. It is therefore important to take these lessons into account and build the right alliances to realise the full potential of the initiative.

The Honourable Ligia de Doens, Minister of Environment for Panama, stressed that Bio-Carbon is a global issue and expressed his satisfaction to see the existing progress on REDD. He expressed his appreciation for the Africa Bio-Carbon Initiative led by COMESA and concluded with an appeal to work together for "our people."

Speaking on behalf of the G77+China, a group of developing countries, as well as his own country, Antigua and Barbuda, Honourable Ambassador Blake stretched the links between Africa and the Caribbean. He recognized the importance of the Bio-Carbon Initiative for Africa and expressed his solidarity based on historical links between the people for the Caribbean. The Initiative deserves full support since Africa has suffered most from deforestation and is most vulnerable to climate change.

The representative from the Government of Australia expressed his appreciation for being invited to the launch of the Initiative which he regards as an important step to set the scene

² Name to be provided by FANRPAN.

for a positive result at the next Conference of Parties in Copenhagen, which is critical. Australia has been very active on Bio-Carbon with focus on REDD. For example, Australia developed two pilot projects in close collaboration with Indonesia, the practical lessons from which resulted in a formal submission at the Conference of Parties in Poznan. The key challenge remains the monitoring of changes in vegetation that are relevant to climate change. Australia has developed a very cost-effective way of bio-carbon accounting with remote sensing, which only costs \$0.5 million for the whole Australian continent per year. However, the government has so far not included agriculture in its effort as measuring the contribution to climate change is still too difficult. Australia is nevertheless open to support the Africa Bio-Carbon Initiative and looks forward to its results.

Brent Swallow from the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) emphasised the importance of combining Reduced Emissions from Degradation and Deforestation (REDD) with Agriculture, Forestry and other Land Uses (AFOLU) and create a strong link to adaptation in the ongoing climate change negotiations as those three pillars are very closely linked. He recommended that African negotiators follow the Nairobi Declaration of Ministers of Agriculture and Environment to form a unified position on these issues. The main task for Africa will be to show the importance of agriculture for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The following additional remarks were made in the question and answer section from the audience. Delegates from the official delegation of **Zambia/Malawi** requested additional insights in the lessons from establishing the initiative and feedback to date as input in their ongoing activities in the negotiations.

Alexander Mueller from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) pointed out the challenge of bringing together the environment and agriculture which are usually treated as separate issues and praised the courage of the Africa Bio-Carbon Initiative in doing so. In his view, this broad initiative could be a starting point for a win-win situation for addressing climate change and food security. He offered his support and requested information on how to get involved in the Initiative.

A representative from Oxfam highlighted the importance of bringing Ministers of Finance into the process. Further remarks from the audience supported this approach and also highlighted the importance of liaising with African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) as the umbrella organisation for Africa's roadmap in the climate change negotiations. In his response, Mr Ngwenya confirmed the existing engagement of Ministers across all relevant resorts. In addition, he emphasised the importance of increased South-South

collaboration, especially to align African and Latin American forces based on common interests with regard to Bio-Carbon.

A representative from the US Forest Service highly welcomed the Initiative but warned about the difficulty of advocating for Bio-Carbon. He mentioned that the US government has also tried to advance this issue in the past but experience a great number of push-backs. However, he acknowledged the merit of an Africa-led Initiative and requested more information on how to better engage with COMESA.

In his final remarks, Mr Ngwenya thanked the audience for their time and stressed the need to reconcile Africa's position to speak with a unified voice in the ongoing climate change negotiations. "We should not have an agenda that only benefit those who are already benefiting," he concluded.

The event was followed by an international press conference which was directly preceded by a press conference by Nobel Laureate Wangari Maathai who spoke in support of the Africa Bio-Carbon Initiative, led by COMESA, and highlighted the importance of an integrated approach to an Africa climate solution.

Attachments:

1. Speech by Dr Lindiwe Sibanda, Chief Executive Officer, FANRPAN
2. Speech by Mr Sindiso Ngwenya, Secretary General, COMESA
3. List of Participants³
4. Programme of the launch
5. FAQ

³ To be provided by FANRPAN based on the business cards collected at the event.