

Senchi Statement to Promote Investment in Africa's Natural Capital for Inclusive Development

Context

On 9-10 October 2015 in Senchi, Ghana, over 200 participants from 41 countries worldwide, including business, governments, civil society, academia, development organisations and financial institutions came together to exchange ideas and practices at the first Pan-African Business and Biodiversity Forum (PANBBF¹).

The Forum participants examined issues of relevance to the business-biodiversity interface in four thematic areas: Extractive Industries, Natural Capital Accounting, Sustainable Agriculture and Renewable Energy. This Forum took place as part of global exchanges relating to the challenges of sustainable development and the importance of conserving natural capital towards a prosperous and viable future for Africa and beyond.

Issues

The environmental challenges that we are currently facing around the world make it imperative that society as a whole finds new paradigms and innovative solutions to help ensure that improved business models remain profitable while supporting inclusive and sustainable development. Civil society and academia should provide evidence-based information to guide public and corporate policies and practices, and identify and safeguard Key Biodiversity Areas². In addition, governments should recognize their obligation to provide enabling frameworks that ensure all segments of society are able to engage in and benefit from development which sustainably uses but does not erode our natural capital.

This should be in line with international agreements such as the [Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020](#) of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the recently agreed [Sustainable Development Goals](#); and African Union's [Agenda 2063](#); amongst other important international and regional initiatives. Achieving these agreements has to be a shared responsibility, and by cooperating, all segments of the society, including business, can benefit.

Sustainable use of natural capital is key to the alleviation of poverty and our future prosperity as well as ensuring our ongoing health and security through the provision of basic necessities such as food and clean water, and protection from environmental challenges such as climate change

¹ PANBBF was organised by BirdLife International in collaboration with Forum Partners (Partners' list in footnote below) and Sponsors, namely: World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Japan Biodiversity Fund through the Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Ghacem, Newmont, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Conservation International, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) and UNEP-WCMC.

² KBAs (including Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas – IBAs) are sites contributing significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity. They represent the most important sites for biodiversity conservation worldwide, and are identified nationally using globally standardised criteria and thresholds.

and other natural disasters. In addition, our natural capital links us to our traditional strengths and cultural practices that will ensure a world fit for future generations.

Ways forward

A resounding message from the Forum was that only through working together can businesses, government and civil society build trust and understanding so as to create mechanisms to address environmental challenges in Africa.

The Forum Partners³ and participants proposed this to be taken forward through a number of follow up actions:

1. Identify, develop, share and mainstream information and best practices on Key Biodiversity Area safeguards, such as the full application of mitigation hierarchy so as to allow businesses to seize opportunities and manage risk for the benefit of society as a whole.
2. Promote collaborative business and biodiversity initiatives throughout Africa, evidenced by establishing Business and Biodiversity initiatives at national and regional level, as mandated by the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) in its creation of the Global Partnership for Business and Biodiversity Platform.
3. Governments, businesses, civil society and academia should contribute their efforts and resources to the creation and sustenance of these business and biodiversity initiatives such that the benefits that will emanate from them can be maximized.

The Forum Partners will support implementation of these actions, including feeding outcomes into other processes and key upcoming meetings, and support establishment of Business and Biodiversity initiatives at national and regional level. Increased participation and a shared responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the agreed way forward is encouraged.

Thematic conclusions

During the Forum, dialogues were held on the four themes below. These are critical to the ongoing development and fostering of sustainable business operations in Africa, and would benefit from enhanced collaboration through business and biodiversity initiatives. The key ideas that these discussions generated between business, government and civil society are documented for each workshop below.

³ BirdLife International, African Centre for Technology Studies, African Development Bank, Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa, Conservation International, CBD, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Fauna and Flora International, Government of Ghana, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Olam, Pan-African Chamber of Commerce and Industry, The Biodiversity Consultancy, UNDP, United Nations Environment Programme-World Conservation Monitoring Centre, World Bank Group, World Business Council for Sustainable Development and WWF.

Sustainable Agriculture

Food production and security is a high priority to both address current poverty issues and to prepare for the predicted increase in population size and consumer aspirations in Africa. To meet these demand requires capacity development, information, innovation, and investment, with enhanced collaboration amongst the various stakeholder groups.

This collaboration needs to take place at the national level, e.g. through collaborative business and biodiversity, and sector specific, platforms, along supply chains, and, crucially, at a landscape level for both planning and management. It was agreed that PANBBF Partners could support improved collaboration within these where they already exist, and actively promote new groupings where required.

Extractive Industries

The extractives sector by its nature differs from other sectors because it exploits non-renewable resources and so it *converts* natural capital. Sustainability in the sector comes through resource efficiency and effective protection of important biodiversity values.

The participants representing business, government and civil society stakeholders recognised that they can better address the inherent challenges of the extractive sector if they work in partnership towards the realisation of a sustainable future for Africa's natural resources. In particular, participants recognized the importance of:

- Supporting the effective implementation and improvement of existing regulations to curb illegal and unsustainable practices;
- Aligning their internal policies towards achieving the SDGs (as applicable);
- Building capacity to close the gap in the availability and use of adequate data for planning of natural resource use; and
- Promoting data sharing and accountability in the sector, as well as application of mitigation hierarchy and other safeguard measures.

In recognition of these issues, the PANBBF call for the establishment of multi-stakeholder and cross disciplinary partnerships and dialogues in the field of mining, oil and gas as an important proactive tool to jointly deliver for biodiversity and sustainable development.

Renewable Energy (wind, solar and powerlines)

Africa's energy demand, as well as its role as an energy producer, are both set to increase significantly in the coming years. Additionally, a growing share of current and future energy production has to shift from fossil fuels to sustainable renewable energy sources in order to avoid catastrophic climate change. It was recognized that there is the need for adequate environmental assessments, legislative and enforcement frameworks, including, for example: Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)/Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements; and application of the mitigation hierarchy; spatial planning that is participatory and takes into consideration national biodiversity action plans and commitments, incorporates ecological data,

considers cumulative impacts and transboundary impacts of developments and considers renewable energy alternatives and site selection. It was also recognized that site specific best practices should include adaptive management to minimize any impacts and post construction monitoring must take place with data being publicly shared.

The participants agreed that arrangements fostering partnerships and dialogue between stakeholders are needed. This can be as simple as an annual Forum bringing together decision-makers, developers, private sector, NGOs and specialists to discuss best practices and best practice approaches, or specific initiatives such as a task force that can focus on a regional and ecological set of priorities.

Natural Capital Accounting

It was recognized that Africa's asset wealth in natural capital is being eroded, and that a lack of information, and methodologies, means that information related to the changes in natural capital assets are not available to decision makers.

It was agreed there was a need to raise awareness about the multiple values of natural capital and their benefits for more enlightened decision-making. Although the uses, and methodologies differ, the meeting wished to encourage the private sector to measure and value its impacts and dependencies on natural capital and the public sector to further Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) at the national level.

As this is a new and evolving area globally, as well as in Africa, it needs a range of information, and expertise to develop, test and refine processes. The participants also highlighted the need for increased cooperation between government, private sector and civil society, both within and between African countries, for undertaking and using NCA.

It was proposed that this discussion should be taken forward from PANBBF through increased participation in the Natural Capital Coalition, linkage to NCA initiatives under the Gabarone Declaration, and building on the dialogue at PANBBF by establishment of a regional group(s) for information exchange and dialogue on NCA in the regional context.