

DRAFT –11th October

Senchi Statement - Investing in natural capital for inclusive development

Context

On 9-10 October 2015 in Senchi, Ghana, participants including business, governments, civil society, academia, development organisations and financial institutions from across Africa came together to exchange ideas and practices at the first Pan-African Business and Biodiversity Forum.

The Forum participants examined many issues of relevance to the business-biodiversity interface including topics of specific relevance to the agricultural and extractive sectors as well as discussions concerning natural capital accounting and the challenges of sustainable renewable energy. This meeting took place as part of, and recognized, ongoing global exchanges relating to the challenges of sustainable development and the importance of conserving our natural environment so as to ensure a prosperous and viable future for Africa and beyond.

Issue

The economic and environmental challenges that we are currently facing around the world make it imperative that society as a whole find new paradigms and innovative solutions in order to ensure that improved business models can be established which are increasingly viable and profitable. In addition, governments should recognize their obligation to ensure that all segments of society are able to benefit from development which sustainably uses but does not erode our natural capital. This should be in line with various international agreements such as the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); the recently agreed Sustainable Development Goals; and Agenda 2063 – a Shared Strategic Framework for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development in Africa; amongst other important international and regional initiatives.

Achieving these objectives has to be a shared responsibility, and that by cooperating, all segments of society, including business, can benefit. The preservation of biodiversity is key to the alleviation of poverty and our future prosperity as well as ensuring our ongoing health and security through provision of basic necessities such as food and clean water, and provides us with protection from environmental challenges such as climate change 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.

Agreed ways forward

A resounding message from the meeting was that it is only through working together that businesses, government, academia and civil society can build trust and understanding so as to create the mechanisms to address the environmental and economic challenges that are facing us.

The Forum participants and partner organizations call for this to be taken forward through a number of follow up actions.

As a first step this will involve sharing and mainstreaming best practices and new ideas to allow businesses to seize opportunities and manage risk for the benefit of society as a whole. There is a clear opportunity to build on the success of the Forum and all that has already been done, linking existing networks, associations, regional economic communities, and other initiatives.

A key way of taking these actions forward will be through collaborative business and biodiversity initiatives throughout Africa, as mandated by the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) in its creation of the Global Partnership for Business and Biodiversity, building on the success of similar initiatives in other countries and regions. Substantial progress towards this was made at the PANBBF at national and regional level.

It will require investment and political and corporate will to make this a reality. Therefore, governments, businesses, and civil society are strongly encouraged to contribute their efforts and resources to the creation and sustenance of these initiatives such that the benefits that will emanate from them can be maximized.

The Forum partners will maintain and extend the forum and contribute to taking forward these actions including feeding them into other processes and key upcoming meetings. Increased participation and a shared responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the agreed way forward is encouraged.

Thematic conclusions

Throughout the Forum, dialogues were held on a number of topics critical to the ongoing development and fostering of sustainable business conditions in Africa which would benefit from enhanced collaboration through these initiatives. The key ideas that these discussions generated between business, government and civil society are documented for each workshop below.

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 the subsequent demand, especially in view of the negative impacts of predicted climate change on productivity, without further eroding natural capital, will require “smart” agriculture. This will need to simultaneously address the needs of increased productivity and profitability with improved environmental sustainability, including climate mitigation and adaptation.

Such approaches require capacity development, information, good communications, innovation, problem solving, and investment. This will therefore require inputs from businesses, governments, civil society and academia, as well as farmers and other producers. Although there are many examples of good practice to draw upon, taking this to scale will require enhanced collaboration amongst these groups.

This collaboration needs to take place a 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. The need for this is fully recognized by businesses, and business associations, amongst others, and a number of initiatives are already under development. 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 contribution to sustainable environmental and social development (including better protection of critical ecosystems and biodiversity).

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 jointly and in partnership towards the realisation of a sustainable future for Africa's mineral resources. In particular, participants recognized the importance of:

- Abiding to existing regulations and support their effective implementation to curb illegal and unsustainable practices
- Contributing to the review and where appropriate improvement of regulatory frameworks;
- Embracing the applicable SDGs and aligning their internal policies towards achieving these goals;
- Dedicating resources and building capacity to close the gap in the availability and use of adequate data for planning of natural resource use;
- Recognising the value and benefit of the evolving set of industry policies and codes of conduct and best practice; Promoting data sharing and accountability in the sector.

In recognition of these the PANBBF proposes establishing 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.

Sustainable Renewable Energy (wind, solar and powerlines)

Africa's demand for energy, as well as its role as an energy producer, are both set to increase in the coming years. A growing share of our current and future energy production has to shift from fossil fuels to sustainable renewable energy sources in order to avoid catastrophic climate change. It is important that renewable energy facilities are developed and operated in a biodiversity friendly manner.

Recommendations:

- There is the need for adequate legislative frameworks and enforcement on environmental assessments and management.

- An environmental assessment framework should include for example SEA/EIA requirements, application of the mitigation hierarchy and its sequential steps and be based on the precautionary principle.
- Spatial planning that incorporates ecological data for decision making of a renewable energy mix and site selection is essential.
- Spatial planning should facilitate collaboration across a range of stakeholders in development of for example sensitivity maps.
- Spatial planning should include a national or landscape level approach that considers cumulative impacts of a range of developments, including those that traverse national boundaries. This should be linked to national biodiversity commitments and action plans and could be advanced through sensitivity mapping and zoning maps.
- To inform site selection spatial planning and zoning should include development alternatives (locational and technological) that incorporate environmental information.
- At a site level, a commitment to include adaptive management to minimise any impacts is required and post construction monitoring must take place to inform it and its data publicly shared, including sharing EIAs.

Arrangements to foster partnerships and dialogue between stakeholders are needed. This can be as simple as an annual forum bringing together decision-makers, developers, 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 changes to natural capital assets are not available to decision makers. The meeting considered many of the global efforts taking place to effectively value, and account for, natural capital and the resultant ecosystem functions and services.

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 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 meeting therefore recognized the need for increased cooperation between the public sector, the private sector and civil society, within and between African countries, for undertaking and using natural capital accounting for various purposes. It was also recognized that as this develops there will be different perspectives and value sets, though it was emphasised that Natural Capital Accounting does not require the allocation of monetary values. It was noted that there were potential risks involved – but that there were also risks in not having natural capital accounting taken into account in decision making.

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