

Press Release

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Accra

Government of Ghana convenes National Landscape Forum on Natural Resource Management and Forest Economy for inclusive and sustainable growth

The Government of Ghana (GoG), with support from the World Bank, has organized a 3-day National Landscape Forum, a programme which aimed to bring together professionals and interested persons from public, private and non-governmental agencies working in the areas of natural resources management (NRM) and environmental sustainability in Ghana. The forum showcased project results, facilitated dialogue in specific areas of concern, discussed opportunities for synergies across NRM sectors to achieve stronger impacts, as well as pathways towards harnessing forest-based economy for sustainable economic prosperity.

Currently, the main environmental challenges in Ghana include deforestation, land and landscape degradation, pollution, coastal degradation, and depletion of fish stocks, with the country's economic and human development also vulnerable to climate change and climate-related shocks. The GoG, however, has rolled out several programs to support the sustainable management of its natural resources and environmental restoration, which have been supported by the World Bank through several investment projects, technical assistance, and a carbon finance programme.

Good resource management should be based on data. The Natural Capital Accounting (NCA) programme, with support from the World Bank's Global Program on Sustainability, has supported the Government in developing the land accounts, the ecosystem extent accounts, and the ecosystem services accounts, using the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA). These accounts present changes in land and ecosystem cover and provide physical and monetary value estimates for some of the ecosystem services. Data from these accounts has already been used to develop guidelines for mainstreaming biodiversity into national development planning and to further analyze nexus between poverty and natural capital.

Ghana has a lot to showcase in terms of inclusive and sustainable natural resources management. Ghana is one of the Africa champions on Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), as well as one of the first countries globally to receive carbon payments from the World Bank for emissions reductions generated in the cocoa forest mosaic landscape through propagation of the shaded cocoa systems. Additionally, Ghana's integrated landscape management approaches have been piloted by the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology (MEST) and the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) under the Ghana Sustainable Land and Water Management Project and Forest Investment Program (FIP). These flagship projects helped consolidate implementation experience related to integrated and participatory landscape management, support policy reforms and institutional strengthening in the forestry sector, and pilot many new approaches to sustainable land and water management (SLWM) and community management of natural resources, creation of the community-based governance structures for forest management, and community engagement and empowerment, including scale up of CREMAs in the cocoa forest landscape. These investments have reached over 130,000 beneficiaries with knowledge and inputs related to adoption of

SLWM, sustainable forest management practices and developed significant SLWM extension capacity in Northern Ghana, the most climate sensitive and poorest part of the country.

The Government of Ghana has capitalized on previous successes to advance sustainable landscape and forest management practices within the Northern Savannah Zone and Cocoa Forest Landscape. Supported by the World Bank through investments, technical assistance, and analytics, the Government of Ghana is implementing several initiatives in the natural resources sector aimed at achieving inclusive and sustainable growth. These initiatives include reforming policies and institutions, strengthening community-based governance structures for forest management, promoting environmentally sustainable cocoa production, providing additional livelihoods for forest and rural communities, supporting efforts to formalize small-scale mining, and support mercury-free practices. Additionally, the government is enhancing coastal community resilience against erosion, flooding, and pollution across multiple districts. By leveraging its investments in forests, the government has secured result-based carbon payments amounting to over 20 million dollars, with 60% of the benefits allocated to forest communities.

The 3-day forum officially launched and presented the results for the Natural Capital Accounts developed under the NCA programme, discussed key issues in current projects, with expected outcomes of increased intersectoral understanding of existing challenges and enhanced capacity to plan for future interventions.

Hon. Murtala Mohammed, Minister for Environment, Science and Technology said “I am optimistic, that the discussions we have engaged in will shape the policies and actions that determine the future of our natural landscapes. We must work collectively - government, private sector, civil society and academia, to mainstream biodiversity and natural capital accounting into decision-making processes. Government's commitment to sustainable resource management will be critical in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Global Biodiversity Framework targets, Ghana's Green Growth Agenda and the aspirations of the Africa We Want under the African Union Agenda 2063.

Hon. Emmanuel Armah-Kofi Buah, the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources, expressed gratitude to the World Bank for its continued support, stating “I must extend my sincere appreciation to the World Bank team for their invaluable partnership with the government—a collaboration essential for national development. This new administration remains firmly committed to the sustainable management of the nation's natural resources. We are optimistic that this forum will serve as the right platform to advance this agenda, and we look forward to fostering even stronger partnerships moving forward.”

Speaking on behalf of the World Bank, Robert Taliercio, Division Director for Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone congratulated the GoG on the launch and presentation of three natural capital accounts. He said the Bank is pleased to support the GoG in its quest to manage the country's natural resources and create avenues for discussions of mutual concern. “This forum will focus on understanding sector challenges, enhancing planning capacity and providing a platform for showcasing Ghana's successes and addressing future opportunities in the context of global attention on forests”. He said.

The forum brought together various stakeholders from Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Development Partners, Academia, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Traditional Authorities, Research institutions and Think Tanks, as well as the media.

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