



Short report of the first IUFRO social sciences conference on
“African Forest Policies and Politics” (AFORPOLIS conference 2018),
Yaoundé - Cameroon, 24-27 September 2018

From 24 to 27 September 2018, about 150 participants from 27 countries, including the following African countries (Benin, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mozambique, Madagascar, Nigeria, Tunisia), Japan, Indonesia, USA, China, Canada and European countries (Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom) met in Yaoundé, Cameroon the host country to attend the first IUFRO social sciences conference on “African forest policies and politics” (AFORPOLIS conference 2018). This conference was coordinated by the new IUFRO Working Party on “African forest politics and governance” (IUFRO-WP 9.05.09) and the AFORPOLIS initiative.

Context

AFORPOLIS conference 2018 was organized by the University of Göttingen in Germany, the University of Dschang in Cameroon and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO) and received substantial support from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT/University of Wolverhampton), the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). The three keynote speeches were presented by Prof. Max Krott (University of Göttingen, Germany), Dr. Richard Eba’a (CIFOR, Cameroon) and Prof. Maria Brockhaus (University of Helsinki, Finland).

There were 50 speakers, and 10 poster presentations at the AFORPOLIS conference 2018. Four thematic side-events were organized by research and non-research institutions namely: the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), the French Research Institute for Sustainable Development (OSFACO project, IRD), the Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development of Mozambique, and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

Objective and key messages

The AFORPOLIS conference 2018 sought to advance cutting-edge knowledge on the emergence and evolution of forestland governance in Africa and show that future research in forest policies and politics in Africa should consider the following issues:

- the reduction of major gaps in the development of forest policy in Africa caused by the weak connection between global environmental governance initiatives and domestic formal and informal realities in recipient countries that can be traced to the inadequate formulation of many forest policy reforms;
- the promotion of independent national universities and integration centers, since the future of forestlands in Africa will depend on the capacity and power resources of pro-sustainability actors to promote science-based decisions in developing forest-related policies.

The starting point in this direction is:

- a better understanding of the social, bureaucratic and financial obstacles to the community forestry system in Africa that substantially reduce the effectiveness of the system throughout the continent and especially in the Congo basin. While conversion of forests to agriculture is rapidly expanding in the majority of African countries, it is noteworthy that individual forest plantations are performing increasing well in eastern Africa.
- more consideration for equity, benefit-sharing and gender aspects in forestland policy to encourage greater involvement of pro-poor actors in the governance of African forests

Scientific outcome and the way forward

A selection of the most rigorous manuscripts submitted to the first edition of AFORPOLIS conference, will be considered for publication in a special issue entitled “Forestland Policy and politics in Africa” of the international peer-review journal, *Forest Policy and Economics* (Elsevier, IF: 2.49).

The second edition of the IUFRO social sciences conference on “African Forest Policies and Politics” will take place in September 2020 in Africa. Information on the host country selection as well as the upcoming conference schedule of **AFORPOLIS conference 2020** will be posted soon on the AFORPOLIS website: <http://aforpolis.org/>

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On behalf of AFORPOLIS conference 2018 organizing committee