

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

Paix ó Travail ó Patrie

MINISTERE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT
ET DE LA PROTECTION DE LA NATURE

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Peace ó Work ó Fatherland

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND
PROTECTION OF NATURE

**CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF BIODIVERSITY
AND
THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF BIODIVERSITY
IN CAMEROON**

WEDNESDAY, 12TH MAY 2010

AT THE FOOT OF MOUNT FAKO

REPORT



Submitted by:
The Organizing Committee



I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context and Justification

The earth's species and habitats, as well as the goods and services they provide form the basis of human wealth, health and well-being. However, despite repeated global commitments to protect this heritage, variety of life on planet Earth continues to decline at an unprecedented rate. Biodiversity loss has become a hindrance in the ability of ecosystems to perform their vital functions, and it is in this regard that the United Nations General Assembly saw the need to refocus attentions on this challenge, hence the declaration of 2010 as the international year of biodiversity.



The celebration of the international Day for Biological Diversity has become a well established occurrence in Cameroon, which is one of the signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The goal of this day is to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits from its use. This goal is reflected in the theme for the celebration of the 2010 International Day for Biodiversity: "Biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation".

Unlike the case for other annual international day of biodiversity celebrations, for the celebration of the 2010 version of the International biodiversity day and the International year of biodiversity, the Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature exceptionally put in place a core group to organize the celebrations. The core group was headed by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment and protection of nature. During the organisational process the core group chose amongst four proposed sites, the foot of Mount Fako for the celebration.



The foot of Mount Fako situated in the Fako Division in the South West Region, is a typical embodiment of natural stock management, integrating natural forest ecosystems, agriculture fields, plantations, medicinal plants etc. In a nutshell, all components of a sustainable human development emanating from the rich biodiversity that it offers. This area has a tropical rain forest climate characterized by high humidity and very high temperatures.

Amongst other activities envisaged within the framework of the celebration of the International Year of Biological diversity, the Republic of Cameroon retained Wednesday May 12, 2010 for the organization and celebration of an action day on biological diversity at the Foot of Mount Fako. The following activities preceded the action day; competitions between environmental clubs of primary and secondary schools in Yaoundé and Limbe, and a media competition on the theme "biodiversity and fifty years of Development in Cameroon" was also launched for the National media.

1.2 Objective

Global objective: To sensitize political authorities and the general public on the importance of the protection of ecosystems for the wellbeing of humanity, and the need to put in place and synergise actions at all levels to ensure sustainable benefit from nature's resources.



Specific objective: To show inter-relatedness between human well-being and nature. This perception of the biodiversity goes well beyond the protection of certain animal and plant species. It stipulates the taking into broader perspectives, ecosystems and the services they render to humanity, populations, and other actors.

1.3 Approach

To achieve the proposed goals, essay competitions between environmental clubs of schools were organised, and a media competition on the theme "biodiversity and fifty years of Development in Cameroon" was launched. In addition, participants were divided into groups for the field visit, with the overall aim of achieving a dynamic and interactive celebration of the 2010 international day of biodiversity, and the International year of biodiversity. The proceedings of the celebration took the following course;

- Creation of an organising committee by the Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature.
- Organisation of preparatory meetings with technical and supporting partners.
- Selection of a site for the international biodiversity day celebration matching the theme "biodiversity and development", in order to present the different ecosystem services offered to the local population.
- A general introduction and presentation of the objectives and missions of the action Day.
- Distribution of participants into groups and designation of one or more experts to each group.
- Communication of information relating to the mission to each group according to specific knowledge of the assigned experts, and supply necessary documents to members. Participants were grouped according to the following specialties: Ecology, Flora, mammals, birds and butterflies, Reptiles and amphibians, Non-timber forest products etc.
- Restitution of each group
- Briefing of the media (On how to accompany the groups? Which protagonists can be interviewed...).
- Meeting enabling groups to share their experiments and discuss: restitution of the pedestrian excursions.
- General synthesis (key questions: what was found and/or observed? According to observations, up to what point has the ecosystem remained intact? If a form of degradation was noted, which type was it? What is the significance of this ecosystem to man? What services does this ecosystem offer and who benefits from them? How can protection of this ecosystem be ameliorated?)
- Award of prizes to environmental clubs, and the winner of the media competition.



1.4 Organisation

Exceptionally, for the celebration of the 2010 International day of Biodiversity which also doubled as the celebration of the International year of Biodiversity, the Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature put in place a core group to organize the event. The core group was headed by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature, with members from GTZ/COMIFAC, IUCN, WWF, as well as some Ministerial Staff. The core group set aside the 12th of May, 2010 as the action day, and chose amongst four proposed sites, the foot of Mount Fako as the venue for the celebration.

After choosing the date and site of the action day, the core group proceeded to elaborate various activities as listed below, to mark the celebration of the International Biodiversity day and the international year of biodiversity;

- School competitions (primary, secondary and university) in Yaoundé, Limbe and Buea
- Competition for journalists and media houses (written press, television, radio)
- Nationwide media talks on biodiversity conservation
- Field trip to the biodiversity hotspot at the foot of Mount Fako.
- A biodiversity cultural evening in Limbe
- Launching of the International Year of Biodiversity in Cameroon
- Prize award ceremony

These activities were aimed at achieving greater public awareness on the value of Cameroon's wealth of plant and animal biodiversity, as well as the services offered by this ecological region. All this is in a bit to further highlight the need to prevent the increasing loss of biodiversity and degradation of valuable ecosystems.

1.5 Participants

This celebration brought together actors from different institutions and sectors of development, represented actors of which are listed below;

- 60 Representatives of Ministries (**Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife**);
- Technical and Financial Partners (**GTZ/COMIFAC, WWF, IUCN**);
- 18 Taxonomy experts;
- 30 students from the University of Buea;
- 10 University professors and teachers
- 30 Students and pupils from primary and secondary schools;
- The business world;
- 30 Representatives of local NGOs,
- 20 participants from within the local communities;
- Traditional chiefs;
- 20 Media representatives

A total of about 500 people participated in the celebrations.

II. SCHOOL COMPETITION

The month-long activities marking the international year of biodiversity started on the 12th of April 2010, with a planning meeting of all zonal coordinators of friends-of-nature clubs in the centre region. The environmental clubs prepared poems, sketches, songs slogans and paintings for presentation, all related to the 2010 year of biodiversity theme “Biodiversity is life”, and the theme for the international Biodiversity Day “Biodiversity for Development and poverty alleviation”.

2.1 Objective of School Competition

The school competition was aimed at increasing the awareness of invited pupils, students, teachers and lecturers on biological diversity and the vulnerability of ecosystems, and also to show them practical ways of conserving and protecting biodiversity.

2.2 Organisational Process

School competitions were organised and took place in Yaoundé and Limbe. The schools competed through their environmental clubs. The environmental clubs prepared poems, sketches, songs slogans and paintings, all related to the themes of the two events celebrated. The school competition in Yaoundé took place at the Mvog Betsi Zoological Garden while that of Limbe took place at the Limbe Botanical Garden.

Furthermore, the University of Buea’s environmental Club also brought together environmental science students to compete in brain trust and research exercises, all related to the themes of the celebrations.

2.3 Activities Carried out

- School competitions were organised and took place in Yaoundé, Limbe, and the University of Buea.
- Sensitization, educative talks, clean-up campaigns around the schools and university, and preparation of club’s representatives for the various Competitions.
- Final selection and pledge-taking by friends of Nature in Yaoundé, to be more responsible in their approach towards preserving biodiversity.
- Award of prizes to the ninety pupils and students who won in the competitions in Yaoundé, Limbe and Buea.

III. MEDIA COMPETITION

2010 marked a milestone year for the conservation and sustainable use of Biodiversity. The International Biodiversity Day provided an important opportunity to draw public attention to the theme “Biodiversity for Development and poverty alleviation”.

3.1 Objective of Media Competition

The media competition aimed at increasing public awareness on the importance of biodiversity, and making the concept of ecosystem services more visible and understandable for a broad audience through media including written, radio, television, etc.

3.2 Activities Carried out

The competition was launched for media and journalists to compete on the theme “Biodiversity and fifty years of Development in Cameroon”, and was based on;

- Reports on biodiversity activities
- Radio programmes
- Investigative reports
- Television documentaries

The reports or programmes were to achieve 85% sensitisation of readers, listeners or tele-viewers on the conservation of Biodiversity.

Many participants forwarded competition kits and on the 10th of May 2010 during a selection meeting held in the office of the National Focal Point to the Convention of Biological Diversity, the best media report was selected.

After assessment of the methodological approach of each submitted report, evaluation and analysis based on the defined criteria saw the selection of the report of **Mrs TCHANKO Becky Bissong (CRTV Centre Station Yaoundé)** winner of the competition.

3.3 Participation

All media organs were encouraged to take part, especially those residing in Cameroon. The winner of the competition was to be part of the celebration of the international Biodiversity Day celebration in Bangkigili Community forest.

Media organs covered the celebration of the day through radio, written press and televised reports. Wide media talks were held as well in both public and private radio stations.

IV. FIELD TRIP TO MOUNT FAKO

The day was characterised by the following main aspects:

1. The organizational process
2. Opening ceremony (brief speech from the Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature)
2. A guided tour through the ecological circuit of the Bankigili community forest
3. Biodiversity cultural evening and visit of stands of forest products resulting from the elements of biodiversity.

4.1 Organizational Process

The trip to the hotspot site at the foot of Mount Fako began at the Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature (MINEP), where the participants from Yaoundé gathered to travel to Limbe. On the 12th May 2010 all the participants convened at the Limbe Botanical Garden where they were informed of the objectives of the action day and the field trip to the foot of Mount Fako in a speech delivered by the Secretary General of MINEP. The National Focal Point of the Convention for Biological Diversity elaborated on the field trip site, activities to be carried out during the process.

4.2 Opening ceremony

The day started with a plethora of colourful speeches and guided tours.

- **Speech from the Secretary General Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature.**

In a short speech, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature (MINEP) elaborated the various activities to be carried out by the participants within the framework of the celebrations of the international biodiversity day, and the international Year of biological diversity. The participants were lauded for their presence and participation in the action day festivities.



- **Speech from the Mayor of Idenau Rural Council and Bankigili Regent Chief.**

The Mayor of Idenau Rural Council and the chief of Bankigili village expressed their joy for being chosen to host the celebration of the international day of Biodiversity 2010. A description of the village, as well as an outline of the community forest was given. Nonetheless, the chief laid more emphasis on the importance of the exercise, which he deemed as being an important milestone for nature conservation.

- **Speech from the National Focal point of the CBD**

In her keynote address, the National Focal point thanked and congratulated the participants, technical and financial partners for their respective and collective efforts in the organization of the celebration. Subsequently she encouraged the participants to obey and keep to the instructions given to them by the technical experts.

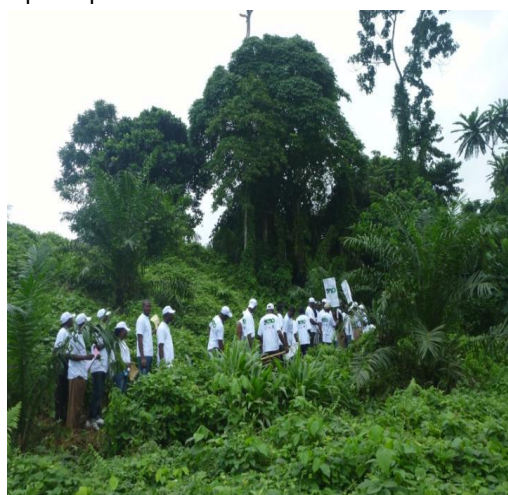
These speeches were followed by some field instructions and directives for the field tour delivered by the scientists and forest guards.

It was an exhortation for the protection of the components of the biodiversity in general and forest resources in particular. It was also a call for the replacement of the depleting forest species from their natural ecological zone.

4.3 Guided tour across the Bankigili Community Forest

The objective of the guided tour was to draw the attention of the participants to the beautiful environment that reigns in a preserved ecosystem, floristic and faunal richness of the Bankigili community forest, and the conceded efforts in the installation of the aforementioned forest.

Accordingly, all the participants made a pedestrian trip along arranged tracks extending approximately 3 km within the Community forest. This is an ecological circuit which made it possible for the participants to touch, see, and appreciate the potentials of this forest, as well as to bond with their contributions to the wellbeing of the local populations and development of the Country in general.



4.4 The Biodiversity cultural evening and visiting of stands of forest products resulting from the elements of biodiversity.



The goal of the biodiversity cultural evening was to visit the exhibition stands, exhibition of the local culture that depicts biodiversity services. It also served to enable the participants beyond documentation, to see concretely certain potentials of the forest bond with the wellbeing of the local populations, and the reduction of poverty.

The Secretary General on behalf of the Minister of Environment and Protection of Nature after having defined biodiversity explained its importance for our wellbeing, development, and poverty reduction.

He explained thereafter reasons for the increasingly high rate of disappearance of species inspite of ratification of the Convention on biodiversity by member states, which is in the first place the main reason for the declaration by United Nations Assembly of the year 2010 as the International Year of Biological Diversity

With palpable examples and figures, he explained the dependence of human beings as elements of biodiversity, and the need for preserving biodiversity.

Consequently, he encouraged Cameroonians to initiate more actions to avoid the loss of biological diversity.

Stands visited were as shown below;



- Stands for vegetable resources (medicinal plants and other woody products) particularly those at risk of disappearance
- stand for the local art of cooking from a base of elements resulting from living resources
- stands for documentation on the conservation of our biodiversity

V. CONCLUSION

In the course of the Day, the participants wandered and improved their knowledge on the concepts of biological diversity. The participants understood the inter-connectedness of the world's living entities, and that the millions of existing species as well as the ecosystems which shelter them, are foundations for the wellbeing of human beings.

In effect, this resulted in real profit-sharing with the various activities of the Day, a strong implication, and group discussions during field restitution.

Generally, an evaluation of the Day led to the conclusion that a majority of the participants were satisfied with the acquired knowledge, and appreciated the atmosphere that reigned throughout the Day. They expressed their wish that such initiatives would often repeat themselves.

ANNEXES

- **Field Technical report**
- **Celebration Program**
- **Celebration Photo Album**