

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
Paix – Travail – Patrie

MINISTRE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT,
DE LA PROTECTION DE LA NATURE
ET DU DEVELOPPEMENT DURABLE



REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
Peace – Work – Fatherland

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT,
PROTECTION OF NATURE AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

REPORT



1. INTRODUCTION

Cameroon joined the global community to celebrate the 2017 International Day of Biodiversity under the global theme “*Biodiversity and Sustainable Tourism*”. Cameroon’s rich biological diversity and exotic landscapes which offer opportunities for sustaining the tourism industry and generating innovative finances to fund activities for biodiversity protection are located in the diverse ecosystems of the Sahel, Savannah, Forest, Mountain and Coasts. The vast network of protected areas within these ecological zones classified as national parks, faunal and floral reserves, sanctuaries and botanical gardens make up 9.6 million ha of surface area, representing 20.18% of national land cover. These consist of major populations of elephants, lions, gorillas, great apes etc. as well as traditional knowledge on biodiversity that are of great tourist attractions. Alongside these, the exploding allocation of forests within the last two decades to council entities, demonstrates the increasing recognition of the critical role local councils can play in the management of biodiversity and critical ecosystems and the potentials of valorising biodiversity in council forests to contribute to council and local economies through various activities including the sustainable tourism industry.

The national decision to celebrate under this theme was justified by the fact that promoting sustainable tourism, constitutes a national priority aligned to commitments taken within global processes notably the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Aichi Targets. These commitments are today translated in the draft National Sustainable Development Goals, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) II and other sector strategy documents. Notwithstanding these commitments, current patterns of creating wealth and jobs from Cameroon’s high conservation efforts in protected areas through ecologically viable tourism is of grave concern. Specifically, in Council forests, there is a deficit in the valorisation of biodiversity and traditional knowledge through tourism as a sustainable alternative for forest exploitation.

Celebrating the International Day of Biodiversity in Cameroon, therefore provided the opportunity to raise awareness and attract investments in sustainable touristic activities that valorise the nation’s rich biological diversity, ecosystem services and traditional knowledge. The two key approaches adopted for this celebration significantly contributed to the great success of the event. The organisation of field visits to high biodiversity conservation value sites with potentials for sustainable tourism enabled a wide outreach to the general public, school children, youth groups, key government organisations with regulatory and decision

making powers, local council authorities, private sector etc...in the various regions of Cameroon. These visits culminated in a National organised visit to a touristic Park and a Media round table discussion to enhance the understanding of the concept of sustainable tourism and the opportunities this offers as a viable investment option to other sectoral activities that exploit or deplete biodiversity.

Furthermore, through an innovative partnership approach adopted by the coordinating institution, the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED), several partners were brought together to support activities for the celebration and these included the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure, National Civic Service Agency for Participation in Development, GIZ, IUCN Radio, EcoPark and other economic operators at regional level.

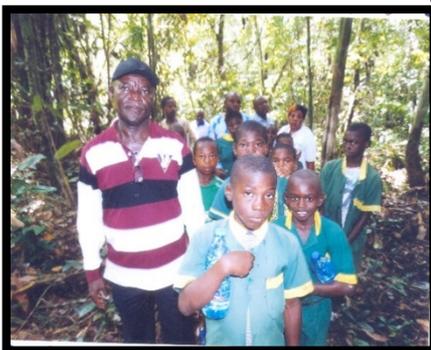
The outcomes of the week-long celebrations, from the 22nd to the 26th of May 2017 at the regional and national levels have been highlighted below.

2. REGIONAL LEVEL CELEBRATIONS (FIELD VISITS)

The criteria for selecting the sites for the field visit included, being a biodiversity hotspot with potentials for sustainable tourism, an existing eco-touristic site, a protected area, a reserve etc.....This led to the identification of the following sites: Mount Oku in the Northwest Region, Lake Ossa in the Littoral Region, Lake Tison Reserve in the Adamawa region, Lake Barombi Reserve in the Southwest region, Ebogo Eco-Touristic Site in the Centre Region and the Nkoladom Touristic Site in the South Region.

The celebrations kicked off on the 22nd of May 2017 with regional visits and wide media coverage in all the selected sites. Participants carried out guided observation/inventory of biodiversity at each hot spot and discussions with the regional delegates and local authorities in charge of the sites as highlighted below.

2.1. Field visit to the Ebogo Touristic Site – Centre Region



Primary school pupils at the Ebogo Touristic site

Situated some 70km from Yaoundé in the Nyong and So'o Division of the Centre Region, the Ebogo Tourist Site is one of four in Cameroon

identified by the UNWTO as part of Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty (STEP). The site has been operational over the last 10 years and is made up of water and mangrove ecosystems, and the Mbalmayo forest.

The disequilibrium in some ecosystems and the disappearance of fauna and flora species in this site hinder the full development of sustainable tourism and require urgent rehabilitation action



2.2. Kilum Ijum Forest Reserve – Northwest Region



The Kilum Mountain Range and the Ijim Ridge are in the Western Highlands of Cameroon commonly referred to as the Bamenda Highlands. The Kilum Range (also known as Mount Oku) is situated in Bui Administrative Division in the Northwest Region.

The Ijim Ridge stretches northwest from Mount Oku, starting from the west side of Lake Oku to Kom in Boyo Division. The contiguous Kilum and Ijim Mountain Forests are now known as the Kilum-Ijim Forest.

The vegetation of Lake Oku is made of many algae species and the surrounding vegetation has more than 40 species of plants; the most attractive/useful plant is *Prunus africana* because of its multiple usage. This vegetation contributes to the specificity of the Oku white honey with different colours according to the season. The Oku notables highlighted the traditional importance of the Lake where rituals are performed yearly and everything around the Lake from mud, plants (dead or alive) are all medicinal and blessed.



Participants at the Oku forest

These forests which also support many endemic birds, plants and other taxa such as amphibians, small mammals and reptiles have experienced unprecedented degradation in recent decades that threaten the touristic activities in this site.



Participants with the Fon at the Oku palace

2.3. Field visit to Lake Barombi – Southwest

Created by order No 17 of 1940, Lake Barombi Reserve is a natural wetland located 303 m above sea level on a large undulating plain north of Mount Cameroon. It is situated in the South West Region of Cameroon in Kumba I Sub Division, Meme Division and covers a total surface area of about 920 ha. The lake is one of the largest crater lakes in Cameroon about



A View of Lake BarombiMbo and the Forest



Participants at the site of fish.

110m deep with a diameter of approx. 2.5 km, it is the main source of potable water for the Kumba municipality. It is an important sanctuary for birds and contains one endemic sub species



Activities at the Lake BarombiMbo Forest Reserve

2.4. Nkoladom Touristic Site – South Region



The celebration at the Nkoladom Touristic Centre was accompanied by an educative excursion relative to sustainable tourism.

The celebrations were officially opened by the Regional Delegate of the South Region. He focused on the region's rich diversity and its role in the promotion of the national economy and tourism as well as the strong correlation between biodiversity and sustainable tourism.

The celebrations were officially opened by the Regional Delegate



Official opening at the Nkoladom museum

The President of the Association of Traditional Rulers in the South presented the relationship between traditional Fondoms and biological diversity by demonstrating that biodiversity was indispensable for customary practices and that rituals would not exist without the environment.



Participants at the site

Assisted by the tourist centre's guide, participants visited the following: Nkoladum Museum with its different statues, photos, works of arts, ancient documents etc..., the artificial lake which is host to several fish species, and a walk in the forest track to observe the rich floral diversity of high medicinal value.



2.5. Lac Tison Touristic Site– Adamawa Region

Lac Tison is a Touristic Site in the Adamawa Region endowed with a rich

biodiversity of plant species endemic to this savannah ecosystem. The main touristic attraction is the Lake. There is a rich concentration of flora and fauna species in and around this lake.

Factors contributing to biodiversity loss include poor waste management, ground and quarry exploitation as well as the absence of security (balustrade/railing), thus the site's management is considered unsustainable.



Volunteers of the National Civic Agency for Participation

Some identified floral species



Nom scientifique : *Faidherbia albida*
Nom pilote : *Acacia*
Famille : *Mimosaceae*



Nom scientifique : *Citrus sinensis*
Nom pilote : *Oranger*
Famille : *Rutacée*

3. NATIONAL LEVEL CELEBRATION

Activities to mark the national level celebration of the 2017 International Day of Biodiversity were organised on the 26th of May, 2017 at EcoPark (eco touristic site) Ahala, located in the outskirts of the city of Yaoundé. EcoPark is a private investment in a close ranged touristic and leisure site which greatly valorises flora and fauna and favors the protection of biodiversity. EcoPark is a unique creation of a natural environment in the outskirts of an urban milieu for the purpose of tourism and leisure. The four-hectare forest park is composed of a zoo which safe guards some endangered species for learning purposes or interested students as well as for leisure; several artificial fish ponds created in the wetland, and accompanying infrastructure.

Presided over by Hon. Hele Pierre, the Minister of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) with Dr Nana Djalloh, the Minister Delegate in attendance, this event brought together Secretary Generals of the MINEPDED and the Ministry of Fisheries, Directors and Senior officials from Ministries of Environment, Tourism, Fisheries,



Livestock, Forests, Women, Culture etc.. as key sectors involved in decision making of relevance to promoting sustainable tourism. Private Investors, local Councils, Youths and NGOs. Partner organisations in attendance includes GIZ, COMIFAC, WWF and IUCN.

The speech of the Executive Secretary of the Convention of Biological Diversity and that of the Minister of Environment, presented during the official opening ceremony highlighted the importance of biodiversity and its potentials for tourism and livelihoods. Animations with messages centred on the theme for the day were presented by the LANEC youth group, guest artists, traditional dance groups and humourist.



The highlight of the event was in the guided tour of the EcoPark

which took participants including the Minister to some of the major points of attraction offered by the Site. From the guided tour of the zoo, participants observed a wide collection of species of mammals, reptiles, birds etc and these included crocodiles, alligators, reptiles, various monkeys, camels, ostriches and other bird species, tortoises. The lake and the fish



pond provided an opportunity for participants to do sport fishing. The two Ministers were assisted to a luxurious fish catch with the aid of locally made hooks with baits.

The media played a significant role in the national outreach of the key messages and covering



Minister and entourage in a Sport fishing session at EcoPark Lake

activities in all the major hotspots. Media consultants facilitated by GIZ- ProPFE, brought images of regional celebrations to the national media and organised a round table discussion on the theme for the celebration. The panel included the National Focal Point for CBD, Senior official

of the Ministry in charge of tourism, the mayor from an area with a council forest, an ecologist and a private investor (representative of Eco-Park). A live coverage of the event was given by IUCN Radio.

4. CONCLUSION

The 2017 celebration of biodiversity was a remarkable success thanks to the efforts made in reinforcing environmental consciousness and understanding that the diversity of the nation's ecosystems and landscapes provide great opportunities for sustainable touristic activities that that can contribute to the nation's economic growth. The host site for the national celebration, EcoPark, highlighted the mutual benefits private-public sector relationship can offer in the protection of biodiversity, income earnings to employed youth of the centre, learning to students who visit the zoo and leisure to a busy urban city. This successful outcome culminated in the commitments made during the national celebration to develop a concept paper for the mainstreaming of biodiversity in the sustainable tourism sector in Cameroon to be supported by GIZ.

