

The contribution of Congolese Forest Law in sustainable management of forests

Victorine Bibiche Nsimba Kilembe[†];

[†] CABINET YOKO ET ASSOCIES, Congo, Democratic Republic of the

Leading author: bivickykilembe@yahoo.fr

Forests cover 67% of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with an estimated area of 155.5 million ha, 99 million of which are dense humid forests. These forests represent nearly half of Africa's rain forests. Utilization of the wide variety of natural resource blessings, including forests, lakes, marshes and the ocean, has played a significant role in development of human societies. Forests are valuable not only to supply commodities but also to fulfill a variety of functions in terms of watershed protection and soil conservation. Climate change and forests are intrinsically linked. On the one hand, changes in global climate are already stressing forests through higher mean annual temperatures, altered precipitation patterns and more frequent and extreme weather events. At the same time, forests and the wood they produce trap and store carbon dioxide, playing a major role in mitigating climate change. And on the flip side of the coin, when destroyed or over-harvested and burned, forests can become sources of the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. To maintain and restore these functions, appropriate maintenance and management of existing forests is needed. The main statute governing forest resource management in DRC is law 011/2002 pertaining to the forest Code passed in August 2002 (Democratic Republic of Congo), which succeeded colonial legislation dating from April 11, 1949. According to its introductory statement, the Forest Code of 2002 is "...in line with modern principles of management of forest resources and of international conventions on the environment." The objective of the Forest Code is to create "...a legal framework that allows the forest to both fulfill its social and ecological roles in balance, the forest administration to contribute considerably to national development, and for local people to take an active part in forest management and be able to draw legitimate benefits." This Code contains ten titles or chapters. Unfortunately, its application isn't full. Local people aren't often associated in forest management and don't know their rights or their role. They must be more sensitized to this text. Harmony between human activities and the environment isn't achieved. It is essential to build the capacities of actors, sectors and institutions in their use and management of multiple forest resources in order to balance economic growth and livelihood adaptation without jeopardising the resilience of the forest ecosystem to climate change. The main goal of this study is to analyse the contribution of this law in management of Congolese forests, especially in respect of the new international climate change regime, to discover and list some difficulties of its application and to propose several approaches, strategies, ideas which include a global partnership for a better enforcement of this Code.