

CAMEROON

CELEBRATION OF THE

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIODIVERSITY

Yaounde, Cameroon
14 May 2014

THEME: ISLAND BIODIVERSITY

REPORT



A cross-section of the exhibition ground including school children and the media

Yaounde, 15 May 2014

CITATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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- AKWA Patrick- Secretary General of MINEPDED- Representative of the Minister at the celebration;
- GALEGA Prudence- National Focal Point for the Convention on Biological Diversity- coordinator of the celebration;
- WADOU Angele- Sub-Director of Biodiversity and Biosafety, MINEPDED;
- WAYANG Raphael- Chief of Service for Biodiversity, MINEPDED
- NFOR Lilian- Environmental Lawyer at the Service of the Technical Adviser No1 of MINEPDED;
- SHEI Wilson- Project Assistant, ABS;
- NDIFOR Roland -Representative of IUCN- Cameroon;
- BANSEKA Hycinth- Representative of Global Water Partnership- Cameroon
- MBE TAWÉ Alex- Representative of World Fish Centre- Cameroon

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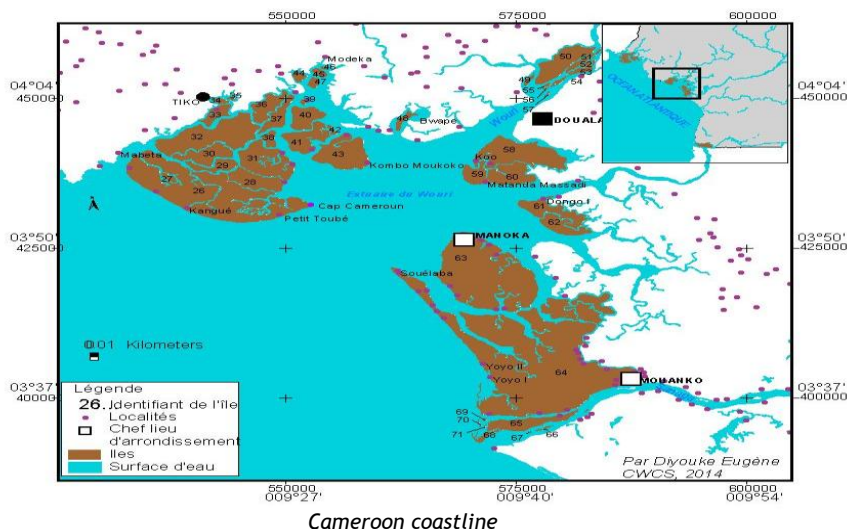
INTRODUCTION

Cameroon as a member of the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity joined the international community to celebrate the International Day for Biodiversity 2014 under the theme ‘Island Biodiversity’.

Islands constitute a unique ecosystem with plant and animal species that are endemic and most importantly contribute to the livelihoods of island communities who make up 1/10th of the world’s population and the economies of countries that depend on their resources.

Cameroon’s coastal and marine environment is a harbour to very unique islands located in the Douala and Bakassi creek areas.

Cameroon’s coastal and marine ecosystem plays host to the islands, peninsulas, islets and fishing camps of the small territories which by the hazard of tectonics were isolated from the continental block. Located in the six major coastal divisions of N’dian, Fako, Meme, Mungo, Sanaga Maritime, Wouri and Ocean, Cameroon has more than 70 of these small island blocks. The main islands include Bakassi, Akwabane, Idabato and Erong in the South West region and the group of islands in Manoka and around the Cape Coast in the Littoral region. The islanders of Cameroon have in common fishing activities as the main source of their economies. Cameroon islands are sensitive areas due to their position in the forefront of the mainland. They have historically served as trading zones and the base for protection against intrusion into the country.



This ecosystem has been identified within Cameroon's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan II as a high biologically diverse area that is under severe threats and degradation from human interventions. Major drivers of ecosystem degradation and fragmentation in this ecosystem include pollution

from mainland activities, mangrove destruction and fragmentation and coastal erosion. This constitutes a major threat to the aquatic species, weakens the resilience of this unique ecosystem and threatens the survival of the island communities.

The Celebration of the 2014 International Day for Biodiversity in Cameroon provided an opportunity for the following:

- To create national awareness on the importance of the Coastal and Marine Ecosystem in general and Island biodiversity in particular;
- To highlight major threats to this ecosystem;
- To highlight Intervention actions taken by Government, its Partners and Civil Society Actors to redress this situation.

This report highlights the major activities that characterized this celebration including a wide media sensitization program and an exhibition. It identifies key Government Departments, Partner Organisations, NGOs and segments of the general public that participated in the Exhibition that was organised in the esplanade of the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development on the 14th of May 2014.

The international community celebrates the International day for Biodiversity every year on 22 May, but in Cameroon in recent years, this celebration has often been brought forward to earlier dates because of the closeness to National Day celebrations on 20th May. This year, the International Day for Biodiversity 2014 was celebrated in Cameroon on 14 May 2014, under the global theme “Island Biodiversity”. This theme was chosen by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to coincide with the United Nations designation of 2014 as the International Year of Small Island Developing States and to correspond to the CBD’s Conference of Parties Decision XI/15- “to strengthen the implementation of the Programme of Work on Island Biodiversity”. As Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Cameroon has always endeavoured to conform to COP decisions.

PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

The Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development coordinated the preparation of this activity. Under the National Focal Point for the Convention on Biological Diversity, an organising committee was constituted, made up of government officers, international and national NGOs. Several planning meetings were held and led to identifying the key activities to be carried out and the actors to be involved from local level stakeholders to national level actors. The program of activities is attached

MEDIA ACTIVITIES

Public and media sensitisation through radio and television activities were carried out before and after the date fixed for the celebration. To inform the general public and raise awareness on the protection of island biodiversity,

Mrs. Galega Prudence the National Focal Point for Biodiversity and Mrs. Wadou Angele the Sub-Director of Biodiversity and Biosafety were guests on several national media stations and programs including news, 'Hello' and "Bonjour",.

During the celebrations, over 20 private and public media stations covered the exhibition. The IUCN radio station-"Radio Environnement" provided an entire coverage of the day interviewing all exhibitors of stands, key guests at this event including the Secretary General of MINEPDED, senior government officials, senators, coordinators of youth clubs, etc...

Post-event publications and TV documentaries by several media stations continue to focus on island biodiversity.

COMMEMORATION OF ACTIVITIES

The commemoration of activities for the celebration of the International Day for Biodiversity 2014 took place on 14 May at the esplanade of the Ministerial Building No 2, in Yaounde. After heavy rains on the morning of 14 May, regarded by many to be a good sign in favour of biodiversity, the opening ceremony started at 12h00 with the following interventions:

Statement of the Executive Secretary for the Convention of Biological Diversity, presented by the National Focal Point for biodiversity Mrs. Galega Prudence. The Executive Secretary in his statement pointed out that the IDB is an opportunity to recognise the central role of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems to life on earth and to human well-being and called on the international community to identify those innovative projects-"Bright spots" that have the potential to be scaled and replicated as solutions to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity throughout the world, as well as celebrate the spirit of islands and work together for a sustainable future - a future of life in harmony with nature, the future we want. Address of the Minister of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development, represented by the Secretary General Mr. Akwa Patrick highlighted the importance of biodiversity in terms of the goods and services provided- such as food, clothing, housing, medicines and spiritual nourishment for our daily living and underscored the fact that biodiversity supports the economic growth of our country as we strive to attain the goals of the 2035 vision for development in Cameroon. Mr. Akwa Patrick pointed out that the theme of this year's celebration, "Island Biodiversity", gives us the opportunity to highlight the fragility of islands and thus call for commitment to their better management. Cameroon ecosystem is vulnerable and the main underlying causes identified are pollution, the destruction and fragmentation of mangroves and coastal erosion. Also, due to climate change, the destruction of coastal vegetation and floods has had severe impacts on these areas. These factors are major threats to aquatic species; they weaken the resilience of this unique ecosystem and threaten the livelihood of island communities. The consequences of human

activities carried out in the islands and the mainland present serious threats to human development.

Interlude interventions in this event included the following:

- The remarkable presence of school children from secondary, high and university institutions sent out the message of the day through sketches, poems and song demonstrating educational activities to raise awareness on islands biodiversity.
- Several dance groups animated the celebration with drums, songs and dances from the Extreme North, Littoral and North West regions of Cameroon.

THE EXHIBITION

The rest of the programme for the day was centred around an exhibition which brought together the different biodiversity stakeholders and development partners in Cameroon to showcase their work and raise awareness on island biodiversity

Hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development in collaboration with two development partners the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and, the Global Water Partnership, the exhibition ground was the centre of attraction to the general public. There were 8 exhibition stands with experts from 8 biodiversity institutions namely:

- Ministry of Environment Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED),
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN),
- Global Water Partnership (GWP),
- The Watershed Taskforce Group (WTG),
- World Fish Centre (WFC),
- Millennium Ecological Museum (MEM),
- Fédération des Veufs, Veuves et Orphelins (FVVO), and
- Cameroon Association of Girl Guides and Scouts.

Throughout the exhibition which lasted from about 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the general public streamed into the exhibition ground to learn about the theme of the IDB celebration and pick up one or the other document for more information.

PRESENTATION OF STANDS

1, Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development

On the exhibition stands of MINEPDED, presented to the General Public by the Sub-Director of Biodiversity and Biosafety, Mrs. Wadou Angele, were:

- A Map on Cameroon’s marine and coastal zone which enabled a prominent visualisation of the multitude of islands that flank the Gulf of Guinea and the estuaries along Cameroons coast.
- A focus on pollution and threats from mainland activities using plastics that drains into islands and estuaries as an example and samples of proposed alternatives to the use of plastic containers.
- Policy documents including the recently revised National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, which gives particular attention to coastal and marine ecosystems, a characteristic of island beaches and shores; the National Waste Management Strategy, the Framework law on Environmental Management, and the Biosafety Law,
- International agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing
- Awareness raising tools including brochures and flyers of programmes and projects on biodiversity related subjects initiated and/or implemented by the Cameroon government



MINEPDED exhibition stand

2. International Union for Conservation of Nature

The IUCN presented documentation on their activities and research work in Cameroon, but most remarkably on this stand was the IUCN “Radio Environnement” which carried out live coverage of the celebrations and reached out to the general public for the purpose of awareness-raising and sensitisation on nature conservation, biodiversity and, in particular, island biodiversity. The participation of IUCN in this particular edition of the IDB celebrations was highly appreciated by the Government of Cameroon, represented by the Secretary General, for their outstanding and remarkable presence felt not only by participants at the exhibition ground, but also passers-by, through the loud speakers of IUCN mobile radio and the entire nation that followed up the emissions.



IUCN exhibition stand with the mobile "Radio Environnement"

3. Global Water Partnership:

In presenting the content of their exhibition stand to the Secretary General of MINEPDED accompanied by development partners and to the general public, the representative of Global Water Partnership stressed the fact that, to ensure a sustainable conservation of biodiversity, there is need:

- to promote and safeguard water;
- invest in the water sector;
- strengthen partnership; and,
- raise awareness at national and international levels.

Annex to the GWP's exhibition stand, was that of the Watershed Task Group based in Douala, presenting the outcome of a Water Hyacinth Project, an initiative of the Global Water Partnership which is implemented in collaboration with MINEPDED, for the sustainable management of natural resources with a focus on invasive alien species in coastal and marine environment. Invasive water hyacinths from the Douala region were presented and the innovative response in managing this was the harvesting, drying and transforming into bags and baskets. The use of invasive species as raw material for small scale industries provides an effective response to reducing the threats and pressure this presents to island biodiversity near-shore beaches.

4. Millennium Ecological Museum (MEM):

On the stand of MEM were preserved samples of Cameroon's reach coastal and marine ecosystems represented through animal, plant and fungi biodiversity:

- Coral reef,
- Marine tortoise
- Variety of snails
- Various insect species
- Non-timber forest products



MEM exhibition stand

5. World Fish Centre (WFC)

The Cameroon representative of WFC, presented a stand comprising fish species and fish diversity, samples of which were visible on his stand. The focus was on Lindema Island in the Lake Ossa System in the Littoral region. He stressed that, fishing is the main income generating activity and source of protein for these islanders, therefore, the population of Lindema depends on fishing activities for their economic livelihood. He presented live fish samples from Lindema in an improvised fish pond at the exhibition ground which drew a lot of attention.

On the management of plastic wastes on the Lindema Island, he informed curious participants that plastic containers are recycled on the island to preserve live fish because there is a significant presence of plastic wastes on the island but difficult to manage. This was demonstrated through the use of a large plastic container to preserve live fish

The WFC presenter also informed participants that on the Lindema Island, there is pollution from palm oil waste which runs off from large palm plantations on the mainland. The whole island of Lindema is covered with this waste which has had serious adverse effects on aquatic biodiversity. He therefore pointed out the need for ways and means for managing wastes from palm oil factories on the mainland.



WFC Exhibition stand

6. « Fédération des Veufs, Veuves et Orphelins»:

Though uninvited, the representative of this non-governmental organisation proactively showed up at the exhibition ground just after learning of the occasion from the CRTV televised morning programme “Bonjour”, on the morning of the celebration. In her stand, she presented articles made largely by the women from biodiversity resources, for economic improvement and sustainable livelihood. The articles included raffia trays, dish and glass stands, and baskets to replace the use of the recently banned plastic containers.



FVVO exhibition stand

7. « Association des Guides et Eclaireuses Camerounaise et Scoutisme Femmin »

In like manner, the representative of this organization was uninvited but welcomed to put up a stand at the IDB exhibition ground, having learned about the occasion from a news paper. Represented by a woman, the organisation presented documentations on education and awareness raising in biodiversity related areas, aimed at educating children with ages ranging from 6-25, to make biodegradable articles for sale and designs and handicrafts on biodiversity and the environment.

8. “Amis de la Planete”

This is a group of school children coordinated by the Sensitisation Department of MINEPDED. Selected from different educational institutions around Yaounde, this group of 50 children whose levels vary from secondary and high schools to university, made a difference during the celebration of the IDB 2014 in Cameroon. Their very remarkable contributions were made through sketches, poems and songs, demonstrating educational activities to raise awareness on islands biodiversity, impact of plastic waste and chemical substances on coastal and marine ecosystem, and, in particular the island biodiversity



School children raising awareness in song

The exhibition came to a close at 4.00pm

9. CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the celebration of the 2014 International Day for Biodiversity in Cameroon was a great success in terms of organisation, participation, presentations, and meeting the expectations of both the organisers and the participants.

Partnership with all key stakeholder groups including International organisations at local level organising with field experiences, women's groups and youths, remains key in ensuring future success in IDB celebrations and creating the wide awareness desired. It is expected that all stakeholders will henceforth give a focused attention in their action plans and interventions on island biodiversity which is under great threats and yet provides great benefits for islanders and the nation.

ANNEX

PHOTOS GALLERY



SG reads MINEPDED speech as rain drizzles.



IUCN "Radio Environnement" interviews NFP along side visiting Senator Doh



Introduction of exhibition ground to SG of MINEPDED



Policy documents including NBSAP- MINEPDED stand



International agreements including the CBD



Setting up the MINEPDED stand



The NFP overseeing the exhibition stands



School children & a dance group



Traditional dance group from the northern region of Cameroon



Masquerade of dance group from the North West



Dance group from Littoral



Sustainable use of biological resources- "Item 11"



Enough for today and tomorrow?