

**Press Release**

***THE ECOWAS CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP ON SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF FOREST (SMF) WITH A FOCUS ON REDD+ SUCCESSFULLY CONCLUDED ON THE 29 APRIL 2015 IN NIGER***

The ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE), in partnership with the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy of Niger and with the support of the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management held the ECOWAS Capacity Building Workshop on Sustainable Management of Forest with a focus on REDD+ in Niamey, Niger on 27 and 28 April 2015.

The workshop brought together technical and policy advisers in the energy and forestry sectors in both the public, private and civil society organisations from the ECOWAS member states with the objective to share information and to enhance capacities of actors within the wood energy value-chain**.** Discussions covered the integration of sustainable management of forest into national forest and agricultural policies and strategies and made a set of recommendations and the central role local communities have played and continue to play when it comes to SMF.

The workshop was officially opened by Hon. Foumakoye GADO, Minister for Petroleum and Energy of the Republic of Niger after the keynote speech from Hon. Adamou CHAIFOU, Minister for the Environment, Urbanisation and Sustainable Development. Additionally, Mr. Mahama Kappiah, the Executive Director of ECREEE, and the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management delivered speeches both recognizing the importance of the theme of the workshop and highlighting the necessity for more participation and inclusion of time-tested techniques for sustainable management of forest.

In their speeches, the Honourable Ministers expressed their satisfaction to ECREEE and its partners for responding to the needs of the member states and also for organising the workshop in Niger. They hope that the delegates in attendance will benefit from the capacity building opportunity offered to them and that the lessons learned will be widely disseminated.

The workshop noted the challenges of the high dependence of the ever-growing population on woody biomass that is often used in an inefficient manner with devastating effects on health, the forest and the environment. It was therefore discussed and agreed to increase the introduction of sustainable management of the woody biomass within all levels of the supply-chain. ECREEE was commended for bringing together actors from the supply and demand side (energy and forestry) as the lack of coordination between these entities is often a key barrier to sustainable management of forests. Delegates agreed that efforts need to be made in terms of efficient and scrupulous mechanisms in harvesting, transformation and utilization.

The workshop identified mechanisms such as REDD+, as a mechanism for sustainable management of the forest. The representatives from the civil society stressed the need to make the REDD+ and all sustainable management activities more inclusive to benefit the local population that depends on the forest as a source of livelihood for medicine, food, wood for both energy and construction and shelter for the ecosystem. If sustainably managed, it can provide opportunities for employment and income, especially with the involvement of the rural populations.

The workshop was officially closed by Mr. Halilou Kane, Secretary General at the Ministry of Petroleum and Energy. In his remarks, he expressed the appreciation of the Ministry and the Government to ECREEE for the timely intervention on this thematic area. He regretted the negative consequences in the socio-economic and environmental landscapes of the region. Talking on behalf of the Executive Director of ECREEE at the closing session, Mr. Bah F. M. Saho, Renewable Energy Expert at ECREEE, expressed the appreciation of his institution and ECOWAS to the participants for their active participation. He requested for more concerted efforts by all stakeholders in working together to perpetrate more sustainable management of our forest for the benefits of our population.

As part of the activities of the workshop, a study tour was organised to visit a forest in the Torodi region of Niger. This allowed the participants to learn from the experience of Niger in sustainably managing forest to supply rural wood energy markets.

The workshop attracted more than 70 participants. Additional information can be read at: [www.ecreee.org](http://www.ecreee.org).