



IGCC NewsLetter

Special Edition, October, 2006

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ANGOLA - BENIN - CAMEROON - CONGO - CÔTE D'IVOIRE - DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO - EQUATORIAL GUINEA - GABON - GHANA - GUINEA - GUINEA BISSAU - LIBERIA - NIGERIA - SAO TOME & PRINCIPE - SIERRA LEONE - TOGO

HAIL, THE IGCC!

The Interim Guinea Current Commission was born on 22 September 2006. The occasion was the First Meeting of the Ministers responsible for the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME) Project (Abuja Nigeria, 21-22 September 2006)

It started on an auspicious note. The Ministers and development partners led by the Director General of UNIDO were received at the Presidential Villa in the morning of 21 September by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. The Nigerian President congratulated them for agreeing in principle to the establishment of a technical Guinea Current Commission (GCC) that will provide technical backstopping to the implementation of the provisions of International Instruments/Protocols in the areas of marine environmental and living resources management in their sector of the globe. The President saw the Guinea Current Commission as complementary to the existing political and economic union known as the Gulf of Guinea Commission comprising 8 of the 16 GCLME countries and hinted at the possibility of expanding the membership of the Gulf of Guinea Commission to the 16 countries of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem in order to align it with the ecosystem approach.

The President then sent the Secretary to the Federal Government, Chief Ufot Ekaette, to read his speech at the opening ceremony and to declare the meeting open.

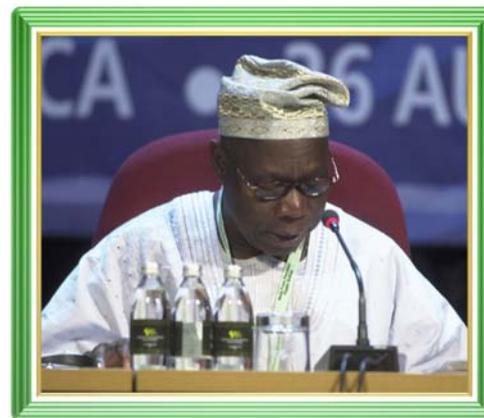
Thereafter, the Ministers listened to UNIDO's evaluation of the progress in project implementation. In their individual statements, the Ministers applauded the achievements of the project towards agreed goals and targets and stressed the necessity to consolidate present and future achievements through an institutional arrangement that will provide a viable mechanism for the promotion of regional consultations and joint actions in marine environmental and living resources management.

It was in this positive atmosphere that the Draft Abuja Declaration seeking to create the Interim Guinea Current Commission (IGCC) was introduced. Due to prior consultations, the debate was brief but uplifting. The Abuja Declaration was unanimously adopted. And the IGCC was born! The newly created Executive Secretariat was exhorted to work assiduously towards a permanent status by 2009.

In this special edition, we bring you the "sights and sounds" of the meeting including the signing ceremony as well as scenes from the preceding 3rd Meeting of the Regional Steering Committee. We also publish in its integrality the Abuja Declaration.

As we laud this achievement, we must remind ourselves of the challenges ahead as the IGCC makes its transition to a permanent Guinea Current Commission (GCC). If the will and enthusiasm that underscored the Abuja Meeting is any indicator, the GCC can be said to be at our fingertips. Welcome IGCC!

Prof Chidi IBE
Regional Director, GCLME
and
Executive Secretary, IGCC



Chief Host, President Olusegun Obasanjo received the Ministers at the Presidential Villa, Abuja



Co-Chairs, Hon. Asamoah Boateng (Ghana) and Chief (Mrs) Helen Esuene (Nigeria) steered the Meeting



UNIDO DG, Dr. Kandeh Yumkella gave an inspirational speech at the Opening Ceremony





The Table of Honour at the Opening Ceremony. L-R, FAO ADG, UNDP Res. Rep., Doyen of Diplomatic Corps, Hon. A. Boateng, Dr. K.Yumkella, Obong U. Ekaette, Chief H. Esuene, Mme. G. Koko, Mr. H. Djombo and Perm. Sec, MoE Nigeria. In the foreground, Prof. Ibe



GCLME Regional Director, Prof. Chidi Ibe accompanying Chief Mrs Esuene to the Conference venue



Time for interaction. Chief Sam Adekunle welcoming HE. Mr. Oloche A. Edache of FAO. Behind them is Guinea Bissau's Environment Minister. To Mr. Edache's right are Ms. Victoria de Barros Neto and Mr David Njiki Njiki, Executive Secretary, SINEPAD/Env



Observing a minute silence in honour of Nigeria's fallen Generals. L-R, Dr. A. Duda (GEF), Dr. C. Ukwue (UNIDO), Prof C. Ibe (GCLME), Chief H. Esuene, Chief S. Adekunle, Dr. A. Ndiaye (UNDP) and Dr. A. Datta (UNEP/GPA).

THE ABUJA DECLARATION

PREAMBLE

We, the Ministers of Environment of Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, and Togo and the Ministers of Fisheries of Angola, Ghana and Sierra Leone, gathered in Abuja, Nigeria, 21 – 22 September, 2006 on the occasion of the First Meeting of Ministers responsible for the implementation of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME) Project:

- Conscious of the fundamental importance of the health of the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem, including its coastal areas and contiguous drainage basins to the well being of the coastal populations, the economies and food security of the coastal states and the socio-cultural life of the Guinea Current Region;
- Noting the deteriorating state of the coastal and marine environment in the GCLME Sub-Region caused by severe depletion of shared resources and the ensuing loss of biodiversity, pollution from land and sea-based activities, the physical destruction of sensitive habitats including the effects of coastal erosion, etc. ;
- Aware of the direct correlation between ecological degradation and escalating poverty, galloping food insecurity and deteriorating health of our coastal populations;
- Noting the trans-boundary nature of the environmental and resource management issues/ problems and reaffirming our commitment to resolving the challenges arising from the identified issues/problems at both national and sub-regional levels, based on the Large Marine Ecosystem Approach which seeks to create an ecosystem-wide assessment and management framework for the sustainable use of living and non-living resources;
- Recognizing the imperative of achieving sustainable development through, *inter alia*:
 - Integration of environmental concerns in planning, accounting and budgeting processes;
 - Capacity building, accentuated stakeholders' participation, public awareness and outreach campaigns;
 - Management of trans-boundary water bodies and the living resources therein, land, forests and biodiversity conservation;
 - Development of environmental information management and decision support systems and the promotion of information and data exchange;
- Further recognizing the need to sustain these activities through an institutionalized permanent regional body that incorporates all key actors;
- Cognisant that a Permanent Regional Commission is an appropriate approach to ensure sustainability and effective implementation of the Abidjan Convention (1981) and the Coastal and Marine Environment component of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) Environmental Action Plan, as well as achieving internationally agreed goals and targets for the protection of coastal and marine environment including those associated with the Global Programme of Action on Land Based Activities (GPA), Millennium Development Goals and World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) (Johannesburg Plan of Implementation);
- Fully conscious that negotiations for a regional Commission will require considerable time and recalling that the provisions of paragraph 37 of the approved Guinea Current LME Project Document calls for the immediate creation of an Interim

SIGNING CEREMONY



L-R, HE. Victoria de Barros Neto, HE. Graciano Domingo (Angola) and HE. Jean-Pierre Babatunde (Benin)



HE. Pierre Hele (Cameroon)



HE. Henry Djombo (Congo)



HE. Mme. Georgette Koko (Gabon) and her DG (Env.) Dr. Massard K. Takaga

Guinea Current Commission (IGCC) prior to the negotiation leading to the establishment of the Permanent Regional Commission;

- Recalling the Accra Ministerial Declaration (10 July, 1998) by the Environment Ministers of the Pilot Phase countries which endorsed a regional approach to the Environmentally Sustainable Development of the Coastal and Marine Environment of the West and Central Africa;
- Further recalling Decision II of the Brazzaville Declaration (26 May, 2006) of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment which calls on African Governments to support the LME Projects in Africa as tools for revitalization and successful implementation of both the Abidjan and Nairobi Conventions (1981 and 1985 respectively);
- Acknowledging the remarkable progress made by the project since its inception in January 2005, in addressing the identified priority environmental and living resource management issues/problems and in particular in strengthening regional coordination mechanisms for consultation and joint actions;
- Noting with appreciation the contributions of Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), United States-National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (US-NOAA), New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), International Maritime Organisation (IMO), Inter Governmental Oceanic Commission of the United Nations Education and Scientific Commission (IOC-UNESCO), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and other international and national Non Governmental Organisations (NGO), as well as other stakeholders including the Private Sector to the positive evolution of the project towards its defined objectives and goals;

DECISION

Do hereby agree

1. To institutionalize regional cooperation by the creation of a technical Interim Guinea Current Commission (IGCC) in the framework of the Abidjan Convention (1981);
2. That the IGCC will assume leadership and coordination of the GCLME Project and for this purpose shall be charged with
 - a) Building capacity for the successful implementation of the Abidjan Convention including the development of appropriate Protocols, afford a vantage platform for the execution of the Coastal and Marine Environment Component of the NEPAD Environmental Action Plan, the GPA-LBA, the Millennium Development Goals and drive the attainment of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Goals in the region;
 - b) Ensuring the completion of the development and implementation of the full Strategic Action Programme (SAP) by the end of the project term in year 2009;
 - c) Promoting a concerted management of major and emerging environmental issues/problems as well as the monitoring of specific situations for the rapid resolution of critical environmental issues in the GCLME region;
 - d) Facilitating the negotiation process amongst all the member countries, parties to the GCLME Project, with a view to establishing a permanent Commission for the Guinea Current region by the year 2009;

SIGNING CEREMONY



*HE. Asamoah Boateng (Ghana) and
HE. Chief Mrs. Helen Esuene (Nigeria)*



*HE. Mamoudou Keita (Guinea) with GCLME
Programme Assistant, Théophile Richard.*

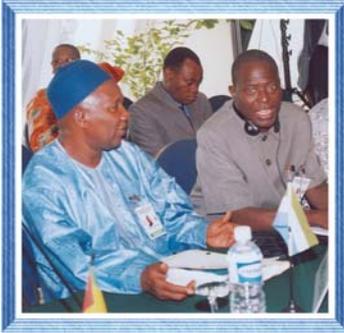


HE. Aristides Ocante da Silva (Guinea-Bissau)



*HE. John Nylander (Liberia) watched by Mr
Ben Turtur Donnie, Exec. Dir. EPA -Liberia*

SIGNING CEREMONY



HE. Dr. Chernor A. Jalloh (Sierra Leone) with his GCLME National Director, Syril Jusu



HE. Kouassi Kouamé Nguettia (Côte d'Ivoire) watched by Cmdt. Dibi, National Programme Assistant



HE. Mr. Leonard Muamba Kanda (RD. Congo) with Prof. José Okond' Ahoka President AGCD/ASBL



HE. Mr. Essowe Ouro-Djeri (Togo) watched by his GCLME National Director, Mr. Bougonou Djeri-Alassani

- e) Further facilitating negotiations on the institutional and legal framework for the permanent commission and relevant sub-commissions or sub-organs;
 - f) Negotiating with countries and other stakeholders and in particular during a Donor's Conference to be hosted by the African Development Bank (AfDB) by 2008, a financing mechanism for the sustainability of the Permanent Commission, as part of the implementation of the full SAP for the 16 Countries;
 - g) To establish a working relationship with the existing Gulf Of Guinea Commission and other bodies such as the African Union;
3. That the institutional framework for the IGCC shaped after the structure of the present GCLME project shall comprise 3 key organs, namely
 - a) The Committee of Ministers,
 - b) The Steering Committee,
 - c) The Executive Secretariat.
 4. That the GCLME Project Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) with its complement of staff will serve as the Executive Secretariat of the Interim Guinea Current Commission and that the present Regional Director of the GCLME Project should be designated to serve as Executive Secretary of the IGCC. The Director General of UNIDO is invited to take the necessary administrative steps to reflect this decision;
 5. That to ensure continuity and cost efficiency, the operations of the IGCC will be assured largely through GCLME project funds. Furthermore, member countries shall provide timely material and financial support, beyond those already pledged, for the expansion and consolidation of activities;
 6. To invite international cooperating partners including specialized donor agencies and the Private Sector to assist the GCLME countries and the IGCC in addressing identified and emerging priority environmental issues and their root causes;
 7. To call on the GCLME countries and all other stakeholders to pursue with vigour the implementation of this Declaration.

Adopted in Abuja, this 22nd day of September, 2006



All smiles at the end : L-R. Dr. Chika Ukwé (UNIDO), Mr. M. Oyebo (Director, MoE, Nigeria), HE. Oloche A. Edache (FAO), Chief Dr. Bradford Brown (US-NOAA) and Prof. Chidi Ibe (IGCC).



Group photograph following the Official Opening of the Ministerial Level Meeting (Abuja, 21-22 September, 2006).



Group photograph following the Official Opening of the third Regional Steering Committee Meeting (Abuja, 19-20 Sept., 2006).