

Mid-term review of National Action Plans ends

Mid-term review of National Action Plans ends; countries make significant progress
By Olu Sarr ACCRA 13 July - Countries participating in the Guinea Current Large Marine Ecosystem (GCLME) project have made significant progress in developing their National Action Plans, the consultant guiding the process said Tuesday.

“Nigeria, Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire have made impressive progress, whose draft plans served as case studies for the other countries,” Andrew Cooke, the consultant for the National Action Plans, said at the end of the two-day Accra workshop. Andrew Cooke, consultant for the National Action Plans. On average, he said, the 16 countries in the GCLME project have reached half-way in the preparation of their Action Plans, which include proposed policy and legal reforms, investment needed and economic instruments. Some countries have gone “a long way” in identifying the strategic investments needed to tackle environmental problems but, he added, “they still have considerable work to do in developing these into bankable projects”. The Action Plans are country driven and contribute to the implementation of a Strategic Action Programme, which is the overarching regional political framework to protect the marine environment in the Guinea Current area against the problems identified in a Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis. Countries have until the end of August - a month before a donor’s conference in Cameroon – to complete their National Action Plans.

“Those who don’t may not be able to benefit fully from the funding opportunities to address their marine environment problems under the GCLME programme,” he said.

Given the crucial importance of the National Action Plans for the ecosystem wide implementation of the Strategic Action Programme, the Guinea Current Commission will further support the National Action Plan Development process.

Furthermore, the partners’ conference in October will link national priorities to donor funding interests, to enhance the chances of attracting greater funding. Participants at the mid-term review of National Action Plans

All countries represented at the workshop identified a trans-boundary need for marine protected areas, sustainable mangrove management and better pollution control and prevention. However, Cooke said, these actions require greater strategic integration into national frameworks for action.

Liberia’s National Action Plan Coordinator, Jacob Dudu, said his country had a lot of ground to cover and needed to come up with suitable projects in the NAP that donors could buy into.

“We want to build a NAP document to show donors that coastal erosion is a serious problem and we want them to help build us a coastal defence system,” he said.

Of Liberia’s 15 counties, nine are coastal and suffer serious erosion problems. Dudu said the worst affected area is the city of Buchanan, in Grand Bassa County. “Fanti Town – a section of City of Buchanan, has gone,” he said.

He estimated that at least US \$1 million would be needed to protect the city from further erosion and, perhaps, reclaim land lost to the sea.

Cameroon faces similar challenges. That country’s NAP coordinator, Jean Folack, said under the National Environment Management Plan the priorities were the management of fish stock; the prevention of coastal and marine pollution; and the rehabilitation of degraded habitat.

“We will need about 10 billion francs CFA [about \$18.8 million] to take care of all these needs,” he said.

The NAP workshop has been very important, he added, because at the national level the NAP would be the concrete translation of the Strategic Action Programme to achieve all goals of the GCLME project. The workshop provided a valuable opportunity for countries to exchange experiences and ideas, useful for completing their planning processes. In all, 14 of the 16 GCLME project countries were represented at the workshop.

Upon the suggestion of UNIDO, the countries took the opportunity to review the problem of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, which is an important trans-boundary issue for the GCLME area and generated a number of ideas for addressing this problem including the use of satellite imagery.