

Theme: How do various processes under the Convention facilitate the development of early warning systems and contingency plans in relation to the extreme weather events and its effects observed in your country in the context of agriculture?

Before getting into the heart of the subject, let me first recall that Gabon is a central African country of about three hundred thousand square kilometers, on the equator on the West coast of Africa, with eight hundred kilometers of coastline. Forest cover is about 88 % of the territory, which has a population of about 1,8 million of people.

Gabon has been one of the most climatically stable places on the African continent throughout the Pleistocene - making it a hot spot for biodiversity. Rainfall averages between 1500 - 3500 mm, but there are no hurricanes or typhoons.

However eighty percent of the population lives in low lying coastal areas, making Gabon vulnerable to several factors including: coastal erosion and flooding.

These factors impact people and the sustainability of our economy, including the agriculture sector. In the medium term we are likely to be impacted by encroachment of saline water into population centres. Furthermore, there is extensive evidence that during times of climate change in the past forest fires have been widespread, as is the case in much of West Africa today.

In order to fully integrate the climate dimension into our national economic development program, the President of Gabon made a commitment in 2009 at the COP in Copenhagen to produce a plan to fight against climate change and to develop a low carbon economy.

In addition, Gabon has developed a Coastal Adaptation Strategy, to evaluate and analyze the risks or the impacts of

climate change on the coast and to propose appropriate action plans to mitigate and adapt to these impacts.

Our newly developed national land use plan takes into account all of these factors and lays the foundation for forest preservation and climate resilient agriculture.

So all agricultural projects, particularly in the agro industry, will be implemented in geographic areas where the risks related to climate change are lowest and where impacts on climate change through carbon emissions are minimized.

Gabon has recently created an Earth Observation Agency, AGEOS - a remote sensing center equipped with a direct reception antenna, which can provide satellite data for 23 neighboring countries. Our intention

is to use these data for the sustainable management of the environment, natural resources and land use, in the context of climate change. We will monitor our forests and agricultural lands in real time whilst providing data to all rain forest countries in Africa. One of the first missions of this agency is to develop an early warning pilot system to detect flooding, in the form of a GIS demonstrator.

In the long term, AGEOS's activities will contribute to the production of value-added services, particularly in the production of agricultural mapping. Combined with long-term monitoring in ecological field stations distributed around Gabon, this will give us a unique ability to monitor, model and predict the consequences of future climate change.

But Gabon needs to make more studies on this subject and develop more tools to fill in the lack of data on the impact of climate change on soil and agriculture.

Gabon is working, outside of the Convention, to develop links to international organizations like WMO, the World Meteorological Organization, GEO, the Group on Earth Observation or UN Spider, which is the United Nations

Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response.

I believe that the UNFCCC could play a key role helping us to access additional technologies and expertise in order to develop new services in the agricultural sector.

I very much look forward to working with all of you to make this a reality.