

Southern CSO's Remark presented by Freeman Elohor, at the 14th Participant Assembly (PA14)

Freeman began by appreciating the great work of the FCPF by acknowledging the achievements reported at the country level and the role the FMT must have played in the process, including coordination.

While noting the need to sustain these achievements particularly approaching the closing-out phase of the Readiness Fund. Also, commended the WorldBank intervention announcing the Carbon Emission Reduction Fund (CERF) – to deepen the gains of the readiness fund as well as accelerate the REDD objectives.

According to Freeman, more forest areas have been lost since the 2015 Climate Agreement that called on countries and/or governments of nations, to preserve forests and other ecosystems that stores carbon.

Poverty and hunger remain the two main driving forces of this unprecedented changes and forest deforestation because local livelihood depends on it and they must survive. This underscores the need to continue to build more capacity for indigenous people and forest dependent communities (IPLC), provide commensurate livelihood options as well as support non-state actors particularly civil society organisations (CSO's). CSO's can help to grow knowledge of the benefit of forest conservation at the grassroot, engage them in ecosystems protection and also to hold their governments to account to pursue green development.

Covid-19 pandemic has further worsened the challenges of forest preservation with notable impact on individual and economies of nations. While some governments are seen supporting logging activities to increase internally generated revenues (IGR), others are mining and constructing roads in forest protected and REDD project areas.

It is time to support civil society constituency (CSO's) to engage with government over wrong policies and activities capable of reversing these gains as well as investments.

The readiness and Redd funds are investments that should be protected. If nothing is done, there will be no carbon to sell in the future or get returns on donor investments - because most of these prepared forests would have been fragmented or destroyed.

Therefore, the need to continue to monitor readiness projects, support red countries through knowledge sharing and have CSO's alarm the aforementioned concerns, especially with shrinking civil society space – from paucity of funds, government censorship and covid-19 regulations on physical engagements.

We should not continue to lose a battle of simple biology of photosynthesis, which involves keeping our forest and planting trees. Let set a stage for sustainable forest future to win the global climate change war through capacity building and monitoring of governmental programmes.

Emphasizes should be given to the right of local and indigenous people in the FCPF processes including in the engagement and governance of Redd projects. Particularly as they are the custodian of these forest areas and their livelihood depends on it – can be fast-tracked by supporting the Civil societies.

We must do more by taking the benefit of forest to the grassroots where we have these forests – will guarantee the security of forest and readiness investments.

It is time to move beyond just having countries preparing fine documents – with laudable strategies to forest area management, but difficult to implement for lacking inclusiveness during the preparation stage.

Thank you.