

**Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**  
**between**  
**The members of the Southwest Forest Alliance (SWFA) Platform**

**PREAMBLE**

**WHEREAS** the members recognize the value of cooperation in the pursuit of forest and climate protection and restoration in Southwest Ethiopia and will/ agree to cooperate in the coordination and dialogue on forest and climate issues in this specific regard;

**WHEREAS** the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Commission at federal level, the SNNPRS<sup>1</sup> regional Authority of Environmental Protection, Forest and Climate Change Control and its respective zonal and Woreda offices are responsible for the forest law enforcement and protection of Ethiopia's forests and climate at federal, regional and local level;

**WHEREAS** the members seek to strengthen their existing activities, with a view to coordinate and contribute to the proper protection and conservation of the forests and climate in Southwest Ethiopia;

**WHEREAS** duplication of efforts and wastage of resources should be avoided and a learning Platform is required for experience sharing, joint capacity building, discussions and negotiations;

**WHEREAS** the members believe that generating evidences for the forest and climate status and sustainable development in Southwest Ethiopia is essential at all levels for decision-makers and implementing institutions, including to use these evidences during policy revisions, and establishing a strong Platform;

**WHEREAS** the members also recognize the mutual benefits of collaboration in the above areas and that a Platform could potentially lay the ground for a broader cooperation among Government, CSOs and private sectors in the future for the benefit of the forest, biodiversity, climate and the communities in Southwest Ethiopia;

**NOW, THEREFORE**, the *Southwest Forest Alliance (SWFA) Platform has been established.*

**1. OBJECTIVES OF THE PLATFORM**

**Overall Objective:** The SWFA shall serve as a Platform to multiply and complement efforts, avoid duplications and conflicts, and create an enabling environment towards the

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<sup>1</sup> SNNPRS refers to Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State.

protection of Southwest Ethiopia's forests, climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as improvement of sustainable livelihood sources.

**Specific Objectives are:**

- a) To consolidate and synergize efforts, and promote harmonized planning and implementation of context specific forest and livelihood improvement options, and sustainable use of natural resources;
- b) To catalyze, demonstrate and support coordinated efforts towards sustainable and effective forest management and Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) in Southwest Ethiopia;
- c) To generate and share lessons, experiences, evidences, facts and knowledge to support FLR implementation and other forest management;
- d) To develop the capacity of stakeholders and enhance networking for improved forest and climate protection in Southwest Ethiopia;
- e) To provide guidance and directions to implementers/stakeholders to proactively respond, implement and enforce improvements, including relevant legal documents; and
- f) To collect and develop ideas/issues pertinent to policy considerations.

## **2. SCOPE OF THE PLATFORM**

The geographical scope of the SWFA lies on the Southwest forest block (SWFB) that falls within Baro-Akobo and Omo-Gibie basins and it initially targets four zones (Sheka, Kafa, Bench-Sheko and West Omo). The SWFA members shall be working on the conservation of forest, biodiversity, ecosystem services; (forest) landscape restoration, REDD+, climate change adaptation and mitigation; emission reduction and enhancement of sinks for carbon sequestration; socioecological systems' resilience, socio-economic issues and livelihood improvement of communities, sustainable management (e.g. Participatory Forest Management, PFM) and use of natural resources; and related issues that can contribute to benefit the members of the SWFA in attaining their organizational goal and to restore and preserve forest landscapes in Southwest Ethiopia.

The SWFA also works towards the technical scope of contributing to regional, national and international targets and commitments such as REDD+, Bonn Challenge (FLR and AFR100<sup>2</sup>), forest sector transformation, combating desertification, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which all in turn contribute to address the local problems; forest degradation, deforestation, employment

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<sup>2</sup> AFR100 is the African Forest Landscape Restoration target of 100 million hectares by 2030.



opportunity, food security, livelihood improvement, habitat and ecological connectivity, loss of biodiversity, etc. At its core function, the Platform aims to sustain and enhance Southwest Ethiopia's forest and its ecosystem services, build socioecological resilience and human wellbeing in the landscapes. To enable these, a guiding strategy to be developed is wished for.

It will also provide policy advice and inputs so as to contribute to policy revision and development pertinent to the reality on the ground.

### **3. MEMBERSHIP**

At least 20 organizations including government institutions, NGOs, CBOs, bilateral representatives/ REDD+ actors/ consultancies, universities, research, private sector, and others are expected to commit as members of the SWFA Platform. Membership is based on institutional legal roles and mandates, relatedness of businesses and voluntary bases to potentially contribute towards the protection and sustainable management of Southwest Ethiopia's forest and its climate by involving the community members in the landscapes and to address their needs. The SWFA Platform, including NABU and EWNRA, encourages stakeholders who have interest and stakes in the Southwest forests of Ethiopia to become members!

Members of the Platform have to necessarily contribute, in one way or another, towards attaining the objectives of the Platform for positive exchange, collaboration and joint capacity development. Hence, any time after its establishment, new stakeholders who have the interest to join the Platform and contribute towards its objectives are allowed to become a member when approved by the General Assembly. For this, they have to submit their appeal in a written form to the secretary of the Platform.

Though the membership is voluntary, members of the SWFA should withdraw from the Platform by giving an advance written notice to the secretary of the Platform three months before withdrawal and has to be decided by the General Assembly. If a member submits the written notice for withdrawal a smooth ongoing of Platform decisions and activities should be ensured. For this, until the time of leaving the Platform the withdrawing member should support the remaining members in clarifying how to divide/cover the withdrawing member's roles and responsibilities.

*See annex 1 for list of current members.*

### **4. STRUCTURE OF THE PLATFORM**

#### **4.1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The SWFA has a General Assembly that constitutes all the registered members of the Platform. The General Assembly is thus considered as the decision making body for the Platform.

#### **4.1.1. CHAIRPERSON**

The Director General of the SNNPR Environmental Protection, Forest and Climate Change Control Authority (EPFCCCA) shall serve as the chairperson of the Platform. The Chairperson convenes and invites to the meetings of the Platform.

#### **4.1.2. SECRETARY**

The Secretary will be elected every two years from the Platform members and will lead the activities of the Platform in the absence of the Chairperson. The Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union (NABU) is elected to serve as the first secretary of the SWFA Platform. This role will be embodied by the Project Coordinator of NABU's *Forests for Future* project.

### **5. WORKING MODALITIES**

Working modalities of the Platform to be followed by members are:

- a) The consecutive Platform meetings are expected to be attended by heads or deputy heads or relevant top delegates (e.g. relevant director, coordinator or technical team leader) of the member organizations as assigned by their respective institutions.
- b) Regular meetings will be organized in a defined time interval (twice a year as agreed during the first consultative meeting), where members will share and discuss their experiences, lessons learned and concerns.
- c) For the proper functioning of the Platform, a meeting agenda will be set in advance in order to agree on topics, inputs and speakers. The consecutive consultative meetings aim to create awareness, discuss new developments, develop capacities of members and create common understanding on the context, challenges, and possible solutions in Southwest Ethiopia's forest landscapes.
- d) The Platform will have a chair person and secretary, as indicated in section 4, with defined roles.
- e) For the success of the Platform, members are expected to proactively and timely communicate about and respond to any pertinent issues and communications from the secretary as well as notify any changes, updates and disagreements to the same.
- f) Disagreements of any kind and from any members as well as changes that affect the success of this Platform will be resolved by the Platform, if not settled with the chairperson and secretary.



- g) Members of the Platform have to actively participate and contribute towards attaining the objectives of the Platform.

## **6. DUTIES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **6.1. GENERAL ASSEMBLY/ PLATFORM**

The General Assembly has the following duties and responsibilities.

- a) The General Assembly/Platform will meet at least twice a year.
- b) The General Assembly/Platform will discuss on identified agendas/topics that contribute to attain the objectives of the Platform.
- c) The General Assembly/Platform will give relevant decisions and monitor/evaluate its implementation.
- d) The General Assembly/Platform will facilitate coordination, synergy and joint capacity building.
- e) The General Assembly/Platform will facilitate exchange, networking and relevant law enforcement.
- f) The General Assembly/Platform will support the successful implementation of FLR and the protection of Southwest Ethiopia's forests.
- g) The General Assembly/Platform will facilitate the generation of evidences that support to attain its objectives and its use for policy revision.
- h) The General Assembly/Platform will encourage members to pursue the decisions of the General Assembly in an accountable manner.

### **6.2. PLATFORM MEMBER INSTITUTIONS (Annex 1)**

As members join voluntarily and have the individual responsibility as per their organization's mission to protect and sustainably manage Southwest Ethiopia's forests, individual Platform members/organizations have the following responsibilities:

- a) Abide to the interests, objectives and working modalities of the SWFA Platform in actively participating and contributing.
- b) Respect and pursue the decisions as well as coordinate own activities as per the decisions of the General Assembly.
- c) Contribute to the success of the Platform within their mandate areas and scope of the Platform.
- d) Contribute to knowledge exchange and capacity building by giving technical input e.g. presentations.
- e) Timely respond to communications.
- f) Regularly attend the consecutive Platform meetings.
- g) Introduce other relevant stakeholders to the General Assembly and connect them for joining the Platform.

### **6.3. CHAIRPERSON**

The Chairperson of the Platform will have the following roles and responsibilities:

- a) Will Convene the Platform meetings.
- b) Send invitation letters for Platform meetings facilitated by the Secretary.
- c) Guide meetings/Platform members during the discussion to abide to the working modality of the Platform.
- d) Ensure agendas are within the scope of the Platform.
- e) Ensure and guide the Platform members' contribution according to the scope, objectives and working modality of the Platform. If members do not positively contribute after a first consultation, present the case to the General Assembly/Platform as an agenda for resolution.
- f) Share collected/generated pertinent policy ideas/issues/evidences with relevant policy makers as an input for policy improvements and promote enforcement of existing relevant legal frameworks.

### **6.4. SECRETARY**

The Secretary of the Platform has the following roles and responsibilities:

- a) Record and maintain contact details of Platform members (address of the organization; email and phone number of the representative).
- b) Write protocols/minutes and prepare a list of participants for each meeting, ensuring that discussions, recommendations and agreements are well documented in the minute.
- c) Share draft minutes to members for feedback via their contact email address.
- d) Collect and refine issues that have policy implication.
- e) Finalize meeting minutes incorporating relevant feedbacks and share final minute to members for reference and respective actions via their email address.
- f) Collect and record/ save all minutes, files and communicated information relevant for the Platform.
- g) Share all relevant Platform information and documents with relevant NABU and EWNRA employees for the project duration as well as to Platform members.
- h) Inform members via their email/contact addresses about any pertinent matters and, when needed, present cases/issues relevant to the Platform for resolution when not mutually settled.
- i) Convene the Platform meetings in the absence of the Chairperson.

## **7. DECISIONS**

All decisions are acceptable and have to be pursued by members when it is endorsed by at least 50+1 of the actual participating members.



## **8. TASK OF MEMBER INSTITUTIONS**

The Platform members strive to achieve those objectives through:

- Sharing information among stakeholders via different communication channels such as emails, social medias, website, trainings, workshops, etc
- Contributing in joint analysis of key forest landscapes challenges (e.g. institutional and administrative boundaries, conflicts, etc)
- Identification and analysis of knowledge products of best practices.
- Dissemination of knowledge and practices to stakeholders and policy makers.
- Promoting the objectives and lessons of the Platform.
- Providing recommendation/guidance on policy and technical matters to the relevant institution as stated on the scope of the Platform.
- Mobilizing resources and building partnership among member institutions/organization and other potential development partners.
- Contributing towards stocktaking and documentation of activities and results.
- Creating database on issues pertinent to Platform activities to document all forest landscape related information and knowledge for analysis and wider dissemination.
- Serving as education, research and monitoring Platform.

## **9. OUTCOMES OF THE PLATFORM**

The SWFA Platform has the following expected outcomes that emanate from its objectives:

- a) Efforts of member organizations are multiplied and complemented.
- b) Duplications of efforts and conflicts are avoided via consolidating and synergizing efforts, and promoting harmonized planning and implementation of context specific forest and livelihood improvement options, and sustainable use of natural resources.
- c) Enabling environment for promoting sustainable management and protection of the Southwest forests are created.
- d) Coordinated efforts towards the sustainable and effective forest management and FLR in Southwest Ethiopia are catalyzed, demonstrated, supported and enhanced protection and conservation of the Southwest forests.
- e) Lessons, experiences, evidences, facts and knowledge that support FLR implementation and other forest management are generated and shared.
- f) Capacity of stakeholders and networking for improved forest and climate protection in Southwest Ethiopia are built and enhanced.

- g) Relevant guidance and directions were provided to implementers/stakeholders to proactively respond, implement and enforce improvements, including relevant legal documents; and
- h) Ideas/issues pertinent to policy improvements were collected and shared among relevant policy makers.

#### **10. SOURCE OF FUNDING**

While NABU will provide the budget for the Platform activities in the early stage of the Platform operations, member organizations shall take terms to host regular Platform meetings and cover financial costs of the meetings. The meeting costs can be covered either by a single host organization or can be shared between organizations which jointly host the meetings. Moreover, the Platform might engage in fund raising through donation and other means to support its activity.

#### **11. LEGAL STATUS**

The following sets the legal framework of the Platform.

- a) The Platform does not constitute a formal decision-making body.
- b) The Platform is not an incorporated body and is therefore not a separate legal entity distinct from its members.
- c) All activities and administrative procedures of the Platform are governed by the General Assembly.
- d) Financial affairs specifically related to meetings of the Platform are governed by NABU or any other member organization who will cover such costs of meetings as per the financial regulation of the respective organization within the project agreements with the regional Bureau of Finance.
- e) This MoU can be amended every year if requested by the General Assembly and then ratified by the same. Amendments and additions must be in written form and will become part of this MoU once agreed on and signed by all parties.
- f) This MoU will stay valid as long as the Platform/ members of the Platform exist or until it will be amended.
- g) This Platform shall function within the general framework of the country's policies and strategies.

#### **12. HOST AGENCY/OFFICE**

The SNNPRS EPFCCCA and the Secretary organization are the host organizations for the Platform and contact institutions for any issues related to the activities of the Platform.

#### **13. ESTABLISHMENT DATE**



The SWFA Platform has been established on 16 December /2020 at Bonga town, Kafa Zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia and this MoU has been signed during its 2<sup>nd</sup> Platform meeting on 08 June 2021 at Mizan Teferi town, Bench Sheko Zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia.