

**MINUTES OF THE FORNESSA MEETING HELD ON OCTOBER 5, 2019 ON THE
SIDE-LINES OF IUFRO WORLD CONGRESS 2019 IN CURITIBA, BRAZIL IN
ROOM R14, WING 2**

Members Present:

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Absent with Apologies			
44	Rosemary Tonjock	Cameroon	Rosemary32us@yahoo.com
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Agenda:

1. Welcome and introductions (Director, CSIR-FORIG).
2. Opening statement by IUFRO Deputy Director / IUFRO-SPDC Coordinator.
3. Purpose of the meeting and highlights of FORNESSA's activities: Acting FORNESSA Coordinator/Convenor.
4. Discussion on way forward for strengthening FORNESSA and FORNIS in line with IUFRO 2019 - 2024 strategic phase (Director, CSIR-FORIG).
5. Discussion on FORNESSA Management and need for replacing leaders of Thematic areas.
6. AOB.

The meeting started at 12:30 hrs with the Acting Coordinator, Dr. Ernest Foli, introducing Prof. Daniel Ofori as the Chairman. He welcomed the members, and asked them to introduce themselves. Dr. Ofori then invited Dr. Michael Kleine (Deputy Director of IUFRO/IUFRO-SPDC Coordinator) to make an opening statement. Dr. Kleine outlined the history of IUFRO and FORNESSA and then highlighted the need for such networks to exist and function actively. He noted the usefulness of FORNESSA during the 2014 Congress in Kenya. He emphasized that the full functionality of such professional networks is all based on voluntary networking among colleagues. He encouraged FORNESSA members to discuss in detail how members can keep connected going forward after the Congress.

Following the opening statement, Dr. Ernest Foli presented the agenda and purpose of the meeting. He indicated that FORNESSA is a sub-regional network of forestry research institutions, which was established in 2001 with the goal to support and strengthen forestry research organizations in sub-Saharan Africa. He said the purpose of the day's meeting was to take stock of progress made by FORNESSA so far, identify challenges and tackle them. He further stated that networking is a critical strategy for pooling resources to effectively respond to the challenges facing research, and forestry in particular, in the sub-region. He stated that FORNESSA currently comprises 109 member Institutions in 36 countries and needs to be increased. On the progress made so far, he informed members that:

1. A database of members/ institutions has been created;
2. A FORNESSA Information Service called FORNIS has been created (www.fornis.net);
3. Several collaborative projects have been implemented by members;
4. Capacity enhancement training workshops have been held;
5. A book synthesis has been published together with a Policy Brief on Climate Change;
6. A Session was successfully organized by FORNESSA on “**Forest Landscape Restoration for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation: Integrating Research into Policy**” during the XXV IUFRO Congress in Curitiba.

In concluding his introduction he stated among others that harnessing resources through networking is the best approach for the way forward, considering the socio-economic situation of many of the countries. He also added that there is a need to re-strategize to bring our focus in line with UN Agenda 2030 (SDGs) and IUFRO's strategic focus for 2019-2024.

Discussions

Dr. Kleine advised members to invest time in the activities of FORNESSA, and that unless members saw the need to work together it would be difficult for the network to function effectively. He suggested that people working in similar Thematic Areas need to be willing to work together and reach out to each other, for example publishing together. This could form the basis for further collaborations that could even lead to joint projects. Ernest Foli said that he felt there is still a need for the Directors of various Institutes to drive this agenda.

Fola Babalola

- He suggested that FORNESSA should be modelled after the IUFRO Divisions where each thematic area has a Coordinator and Deputy coordinator so that they support each other and remain active.
- He also added that the positions needed to be spread across Africa so that there is active engagement.

Samuel Olajuyigbe

- Need for a road map showing specific issues that should be tackled.
- There should be timelines and targets to measure milestones or achievements.
- People with passion for forest management should be engaged.

Mercy

- Institutional analysis should be done so as to broaden the institutions that can be part of FORNESSA.
- Provide policy direction (credible and quality data management).
- Should involve both individuals and the institutional heads to connect FORNESSA.

Margaret Sraku-Lartey

- She spoke about the FORNIS website and indicated that it is important for all institutions to connect to FORNIS so that information becomes readily available to all members.
- She suggested that a contact person in each institution should be responsible for information sharing.

David Nanang

- He said that for this network to move forward, the governance structure needs to be clear with terms of reference, how they will be selected, how they will function etc.
- The leaders also need to be accountable to someone.
- That technology is important but human interactions is more important.
- In effect, he said commitment is what is required to make whatever structure we develop work well.
- He emphasized the need for African researchers to collaborate effectively.

Prof. Daniel Ofori asked how many Directors should form the Board of Directors and Fola Babalola said that the Board should be represented by a Director from each part of Africa to make 4 (i.e. West, East, North, South). To this, Ernest Foli responded by reading portions of the FORNESSA Constitution to guide further discussion. He said that members should not side-line the Directors and indicated that he would share the Constitution with all members to familiarize themselves with the document.

Atebeh Lekah

- She submitted that during the previous Congress, a similar meeting was held but nothing concrete happened after members departed the Congress.
- She believed that the current meeting should be the turning point to awaken members from their deep slumber.
- We should act now and minimize talk.

Ismail Olabisi Azeez

- He asked that leadership should create avenues for new members to join either as individuals or institutions.
- He suggested that we should select young people as the leaders in order to achieve success since such people would be less busy and have time for the activities of the association.

Prof. Daniel Ofori asked if we could select the leaders during another subsequent meeting but members were not so happy about this approach since the next meeting will not happen anytime soon.

Steve Makungwa

- He asked how the universities will come in if we only focus on Directors of Institutes.

Felix Kanungwe Kalaba

- He said that it is important to find the reasons for the current state of FORNESSA and why people have failed to take up responsibilities.
- That it is important to broaden the number of institutions involved in FORNESSA, i.e., beyond research institutes to also include Universities.
- He said we have to find a niche – what Africa wants to be identified with (e.g., whether FORNESSA becomes a local chapter of IUFRO).
- That we should select people who are willing to work for FORNESSA.
- That we should be careful not to give responsibility to dormant Institutions.

Lizzie Mujuru

- She said that the backgrounds of people nominated for leadership should be shared among members ahead of voting to ensure that the right decisions are made during the vote.

Jane Kiragu

- She asked if she is not in any institution that belongs to FORNESSA, does it mean she cannot be a member?
- Ernest Foli responded that the constitution makes provision for such individuals.

Leila Ndalilo

- Said that the main governance challenges should be mentioned so that it guides our discussion.
- Ernest responded that most of former leaders have retired thus creating a vacuum.

Fola Babalola

- He said Directors are busy people and if we put them as leaders, it would not work well.
- He asked that all elections should be done online with people sending their profiles for selection.

Action Points

Members accepted the proposal of online election of leaders. A group was established to evaluate the constitution and provide feedback within two weeks after leaving the Congress (i.e. until 20.10.2019). The group included Fola Babalola, Michael Kleine, Steve Makungwa and Adejoke Akinyele. Steve Makungwa was asked to coordinate the activities and Ernest Foli to be part of the group.

Steve Makungwa on Thematic Areas

- He said four thematic areas (namely Forests and Poverty Alleviation; Forests and Climate Change; Forest Products Utilization and Trade; Forest Policy and Governance) were developed 10 years ago and asked members whether they were still relevant now.
- Ernest Foli suggested that we adopt the current (2019-2024) Strategic Framework of IUFRO as thematic areas, and members agreed. He suggested that the Committee should plan around the five current IUFRO thematic areas, namely: (1) Forests for People; (2) Forests and Climate Change; (3) Forests and Forest-based Products for a Greener Future; (4) Biodiversity, Ecosystem Services and Biological Invasions; (5) Forests, Soil and Water Interactions.

Dr. Wubalem Tadesse (Director-General of Ethiopian Environment and Forest Research Institute) suggested that we should consider harnessing indigenous knowledge into FORNESSA activities.

Amanubo Amos (President of International Forestry Students Association (IFSA))

- He said that IFSA has a strong structure that functions well including BSc, MSc and PhD students.
- That IFSA is willing to work closely with FORNESSA as they are already doing with IUFRO.

The Chairman suggested that the Coordinators of Climate Change Thematic Area (Steve Makungwa and Ernest Foli) should be maintained to ensure continuity. Fola Babalola said that Tenure of Service (as provided by the FORNESSA Constitution) should be considered to decide whether the Climate Change Coordinators should be maintained or not.

Numan Amanzi

- He asked for clarification on who will vote in the online election and who will receive information on the outcome of the committee's work.
- Ernest Foli said he would circulate the constitution to the entire mailing list and then members would know who qualifies to vote per the Constitution.

Chabi Djagoun

- He suggested that we add timelines to when the new leaders will be selected.

The Chair asked why the databases were not working well as planned. He said that information is not forthcoming from members and encouraged members to be more active with it.

Fola Babalola

- He suggested that during the online voting a Google form could be used to enable this to function well and easily accessible by members.

Ofoegbu Chidiebere

- He said data submission depends on the individual. You have to decide to spend some time to prepare your information properly and this is also useful for collaborations with other researchers across the continent and beyond.

Kwabena Asubonteng

- He asked for a new membership drive so that new people could come on board.

Prof. Daniel Ofori invited Dr. Kleine to give his parting words. Dr. Kleine said he was happy to see members engaged in such active discussions but asked that we ensure some value-added outcomes. He announced that IUFRO through the SPDC, would support participation of a group of 3 (early and mid-career) Scientists working together to submit a paper to the upcoming World Teak Conference to be held in Accra, Ghana in August 2020. Members thanked him and IUFRO for the offer.

Prof. Daniel Ofori remarked that some good progress had been made with the streamlining of governance structure and looked forward to the report of the Constitutional review committee for further advancement. He thanked all members for participating in the meeting and the meeting thus came to a close at 14:15 hrs.

Minutes compiled by

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