

## Seminar of January: Scientific research and the current challenges of the forest sector in Benin

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### **Abstract**

Since 1970s, Benin has suffered several forms of climatic stresses among which are abundant rains, long periods of drought which had a devastating impact particularly on agricultural production, means of subsistence, pasture, and natural ecosystems. These rapid changes in the natural and human landscapes led to a process of decision-making and strategic choice between safeguarding of the natural habitats and the agricultural production for livelihoods and economy. At the same time and as most African countries, Benin is currently following the tendency of fast economic modernization. Although this modernization contributes to the country development, it poses serious threats to the natural resources which, if not well managed, could lead to irreversible and catastrophic losses. For the 20 last years, it is noticed an irreversible tendency towards modernity and this has been retransmitted in all the political speeches. As such, the current challenge is to help governments and peoples to be sailed in this transition towards economic modernization with a significant and representative patrimony of fauna, intact forests and natural landscapes and being able to support the needs of the population which depends upon the resources while providing ecosystems services necessary to survival. Thus, it clearly appears that the process of natural resources management is not static, but rather requires a permanent adaptation to take up the challenge. Unfortunately, the management tools of the natural resources do not follow yet the rhythm of the changes observed both in the factors of threats, the tendencies and factors of deforestation and degradation. It is therefore crucial to diagnose the underlying reasons of this decline and to locate ways out which will make it possible to maintain a constant and permanent watch state for an effective management of the forests and other protected areas in Benin. It is now also now clear that no sustainable development can be achieved without scientific and technological knowledge underlying natural resources management. Moreover almost all forest sectors professionals get knowledge from the universities and research centers. The logical question that arises is to know whether the current scientific research programme accompanies sufficiently the process of natural resources management in Benin. This conference is initiated to share points of view on this question and to discuss the mechanisms of inversion of the tendency to support research which truly accompanies daily management of natural resources by integrating the current great challenges.

**Keywords:** Forests, sustainable management, Scientific research, Forest policies, Republic of Benin