

AFRICA FOREST DOMAIN AWARENESS PROGRAM (2024-2030) (CONCEPT)



Discussion around an Azobe tree (*Lophira alata*) during the field visit at the Arboretum Raponda Walker, Libreville, Gabon, 12 July 2023. © Denis Mahonghol.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACSS	Africa Center for Strategic Studies
ANPN	<i>Agence National des Parcs Nationaux</i> (National Parks Agency, Gabon)
AU	African Union
CAR	Central African Republic
Cmdt	Commandant
Col.	Colonel
CorPPN	<i>Corps pour la Protection des Parcs Nationaux et Réserves Naturelles Apparentées</i> (Corps for the Protection of National Parks and Nature Related Reserves, DRC)
Ha	Hectare
H.E.	His Excellency
IPLC	Indigenous People and Local Communities
ILAT	Illegal Logging and Associated Trade
Lt.	Lieutenant
MINEF	<i>Ministère de l'Economie Forestière, de l'Eau, de la Pêche et des Parcs Nationaux</i> (Ministry of Forest Economy, Water, Fisheries, and National Parks, Gabon).
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal, United Nations
TRAFFIC	The Wildlife Trade Specialists
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USA	United States of America

1. CURRENT SITUATION

A. OVERVIEW

Extending over 624 million hectares (ha), covering 20.6 percent of the continent's land area and representing 15.6 percent of the world's forest cover, Africa's forests have a unique role in contributing to the attainment of the aspirations of the Agenda 2063, the Africa We Want.

African forests are crucial at regional and global scales for maintaining environmental quality and stability. They provide globally important ecosystem services and are indispensable for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG1, SDG2, SDG 13, SDG14 and SDG15. Furthermore, Sustainable Forest Management also contributes towards realising the global objectives of the United Nations Forum on Forests and those of other global and regional forest-related frameworks and instruments.

There is increasing recognition of the importance of forests in climate change adaptation and mitigation, as reflected in many of the Nationally Determined Contributions of the AU Member States as part of their efforts in implementing the Paris Agreement.

This role of forests and trees has also gained recognition in the ongoing climate change negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) framework and under the land degradation neutrality coordinated by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)ⁱ.

However, African forests face many challenges that limit their capacity to provide meaningful and sustainable ecosystem services, including contributing to socio-economic development. These include: weak forest and land-use policies, unsustainable forest management practices, and competition for land from agriculture, mining, infrastructure, settlements and other land uses. Moreover, the forestry sector is given low priority in national plans and budgeting processes. Above all, African forests are subject to Illegal Logging and Associated Trade (ILAT).

ILAT is a growing feature of transnational organized crime in Africa. African countries are estimated to lose \$17 billion yearly to ILAT. High-value timber species are in global demand, with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reporting that Africa's share of rosewood exports to China rose from 40 percent in 2008 to 90 percent in 2018. These trends have significant security implications for the various African countries supplying rare hardwoods to global markets. Illegal logging has numerous adverse environmental effects that weaken human security. Deforestation in the world's second-largest carbon sink, the Congo Basin, is an urgent example. Yet even beyond environmental degradation, timber trafficking affects national security. It amplifies threats posed by organized criminal groups and violent extremist organisations. It also entrenches systemic corruption that undermines accountable governance, a key ingredient of peace and securityⁱⁱ.

B. GENERAL SITUATION MODEL FOR COMBATING ILLEGAL LOGGING AND ASSOCIATED TRADE (ILAT)

The combating ILAT situation model (Figure 1) was developed to provide a high-level overview of ILAT. The model is generalized; it is not context-specific but includes factors that might apply to any regional, national, or local context. For example, in a specific context, the biodiversity focal interest (species) would be identified, and only those applicable threats and drivers would be included in the model. The model will also serve as the foundation for developing theories of change for common strategic objectives.

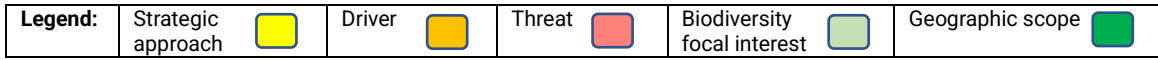
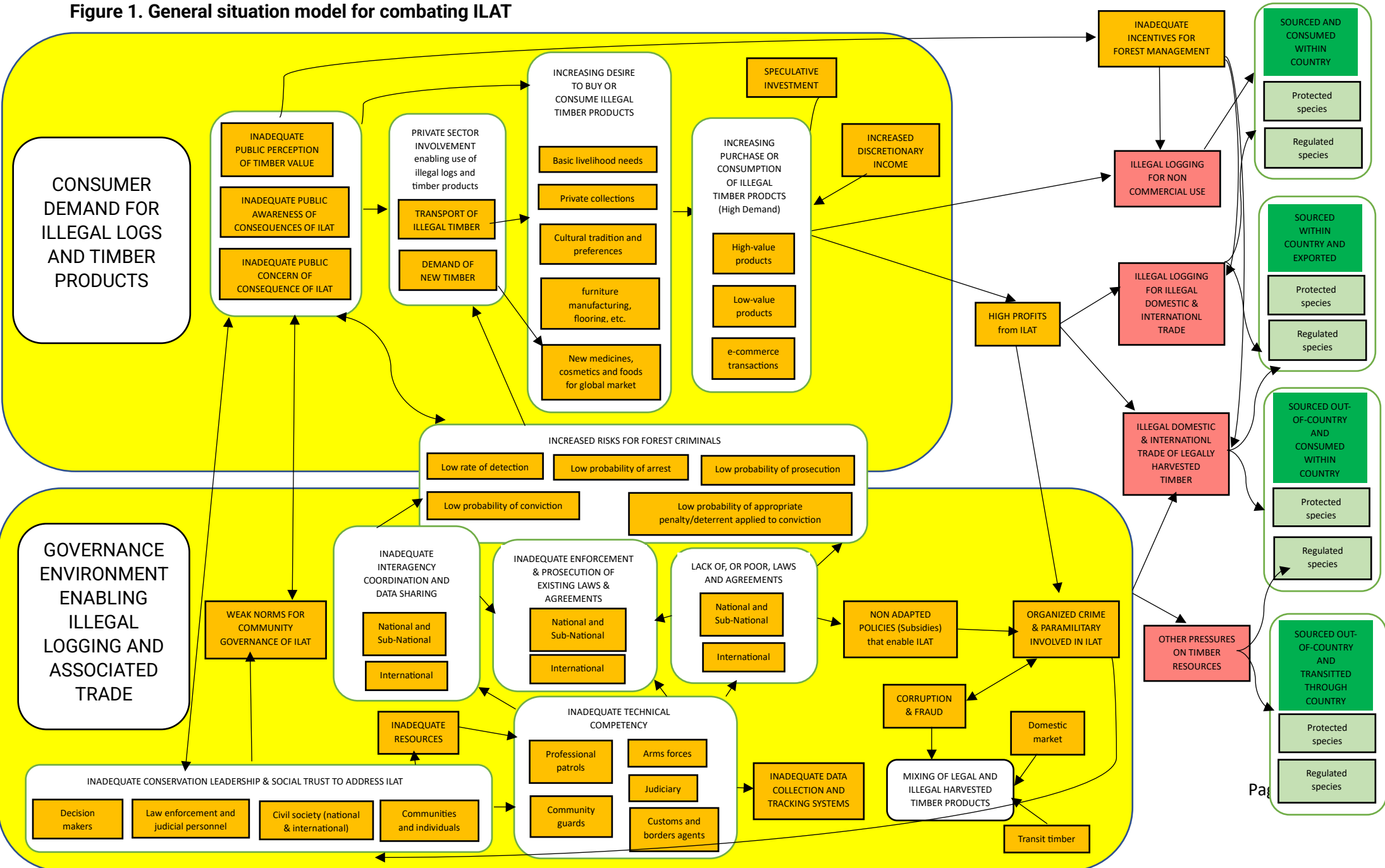


Figure 1. General situation model for combating ILAT



2. VISION

Reflecting the above realities, the AFRICA FOREST DOMAIN AWARENESS PROGRAM (2024-2030), vision is to strengthen sustainable harvesting and forest management across the continent by addressing the challenges undermining the sector's value and role. By implementing this program, Africa hopes to stimulate legal trade of timber, sustain livelihood and boost rural incomes. Therefore, this program, serves as a guideline for African States and other African stakeholders in the forestry sector to assist them in their efforts to counter illegal logging and associated trade and by so doing deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.

Furthermore, the program provides a scope and priority areas for investments and partnerships in the fight against ILAT. Moreover, the program creates an enabling environment for collaboration and policy harmonization between RECs and the African Union Commission, as well as among Member States. It is thus a basis for strengthening, monitoring and reporting on ILAT at continental level.

3. PRIORITY AREAS AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

PRIORITY AREA 1.	Surveillance and prevention of the forest domain
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.	Monitor and prevent from ILAT to enhance the recognition of the diverse values of forests and trees outside forests and the legal & sustainable production, processing, marketing and trade for forest products and ecosystem services.
Desired outcomes	Areas of intervention (actions)
National Policy and Institutional Frameworks are strengthened and harmonized with International Agreements and relevant regional frameworks on forests	Review the laws and regulations (the abolition of transactions in cases of illegal logging), adapt and harmonize according to international agreements and relevant regional frameworks on forests.
Transparency of trade in forest products improved	Control illegal exploitation of forest products
The system of cross border trade in forest products harmonized	Develop an effective system for tracking the cross border movement of forest products
	Use innovative technology to identify timber species
PRIORITY AREA 2.	Awareness raising, information and communication
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.	Raise awareness among all forestry actors, inform and communicate actions
Desired outcomes	Areas of intervention (actions)
Enhanced access to information on forest resources in Africa at all levels	Establish and strengthen online platforms or portals for forest information systems to enable the transparent monitoring of forests and trees at the national and regional levels and the collection, management and sharing of data and findings across sectors.
	Support existing publications, or create new fora, to disseminate scientific, technical and policy knowledge and exchanging experiences and views on the sustainable use and conservation of all types of forest landscapes in Africa.

	Assess capacity gaps of local communities in and around forests and protected areas and undertake targeted capacity development for wider community involvement
e-commerce transactions are screened in real-time	Put in place cyber monitoring systems to follow up timber trade and financial transactions online
PRIORITY AREA 3.	Operation and deterrence
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3.	Carry out regular and deterrent operations
Desired outcomes	Areas of intervention (actions)
Concerted and mixed brigades in place	Establish mixed brigades in-country and between countries
Enforcement and deterrent prosecutions	Create specialized judicial institutions at regional level
IPLC ⁱⁱⁱ involved in forestry operations	Train IPLC as community guards and whistle blowers
PRIORITY AREA 4.	Capacity Development and Knowledge
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4.	To improve capacity and knowledge for countering ILAT by the year 2030
Desired outcomes	Areas of intervention (actions)
Capacities of national Law Enforcement Officials strengthened	Conduct special training (civil military training, judiciary specialized training, forensic, anti-money laundering, etc.)
	Purchase special equipment (Satellites, radars, drones, ID tool, timber tracker devices, etc.)
	Train in quantity several law enforcement
Strengthened regional multidisciplinary forestry research and education to meet economic, social and environmental challenges	Develop and implement capacity-building strategies and programmes at the national and regional levels to respond comprehensively to technical and institutional needs for countering ILAT
	Develop and implement capacity building strategies and programs for local organizations and communities to participate in sustainable forest management
PRIORITY AREA 5.	Technical and Financial Partnerships
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5.	Encourage strategic partnerships (technical and financial)
Desired outcomes	Areas of intervention (actions)
Relevant partners to support the fight against ILAT at national, regional and international levels assessed	Assess existing capacities, capacity needs and opportunities of institutions and organizations in the forest sector in support of countering the ILAT
Pertinent partners engaged	Draw a list of relevant partners region per region

4. IMPLEMENTATION

For the effective and efficient implementation of the AFRICA FOREST DOMAIN AWARENESS PROGRAM, each desired outcomes should be declined in indicators, implementing entity(ies) and supporting partners.

INDICATORS	WHO IMPLEMENT	SUPPORTING PARTNERS
<p>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1.</p> <p>Monitor and prevent from ILAT to enhance the recognition of the diverse values of forests and trees outside forests and the legal & sustainable production, processing, marketing and trade for forest products and ecosystem services.</p>		
<p>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2.</p> <p>Raise awareness among all forestry actors, inform and communicate actions</p>		
<p>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3.</p> <p>Carry out regular and deterrent operations</p>		
<p>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4.</p> <p>To improve capacity and knowledge for countering ILAT by the year 2030</p>		
<p>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5.</p> <p>Encourage strategic partnerships</p>		

REFERENCES

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- i H.E. Ambassador. Josefa Leonel Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, AU.
 - ii ACSS Syllabus, 2023. Coordinating Security Sector Responses to Countering Illegal Logging program, Libreville, Gabon, 10-14 July 2023.
 - iii Indigenous People and Local Communities