

Regional Policy Coherence for the Great Green Wall Initiative: *Strengthening Synergies for the Sustainable Management of Africa's Forests*

03 POLICY BRIEF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The sustainable management of Africa's forests requires a coordinated and regionally aligned policy framework that fosters synergy between national and continental strategies. Alignment of the African Union Great Green Wall Initiative Strategy and Ten-Year Implementation Framework (GGWI Strategy) (2024-2034) with the Sustainable Forest Management Framework for Africa (SFMF) (2020-2030) strengthens the case for forest conservation and tree-based land restoration efforts.

The sustainable management of Africa's forests has positive outcomes in other target areas of the GGWI Strategy such as enhanced rural livelihoods, increased biodiversity richness, strengthened food security, and bolstered climate resilience as well as accelerates progress toward overarching commitments such as the

African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative, African Union's Agenda 2063, UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

The seventy-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly 2025, adopted the period 2027–2036 as the United Nations Decade for Afforestation and Reforestation in line with Sustainable Forest Management, within existing structures and available resources, with the objective of raising global awareness, fostering political will, mobilising action at all levels and strengthening international cooperation and capacity-building to halt and reverse the

loss of forest cover worldwide and to support efforts in afforestation and reforestation in line with sustainable forest management, in alignment with relevant global frameworks.

In this regard governments and other relevant stakeholders, including international and regional organisations, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, the private sector and academia, are called upon to actively support the implementation of the Decade, including through voluntary contributions, as appropriate, and to share best practices and knowledge in this regard.

The GGWI Strategy and the SFMF share a strong emphasis on ecosystem restoration, climate resilience, and community development, offering a solid platform for strategic synergy. However, to unlock their full potential differences in ecological

scope, sectoral entry points, and financial visibility, as well as a strengthened approach to accessing carbon finance, should be addressed through more integrated planning, harmonised implementation, and aligned investment strategies. Such coherence will not only enhance implementation on the ground but will also improve resource efficiency, mobilise financial investments, and foster cross-sectoral collaboration.

This policy brief highlights the interconnected challenges of land degradation, deforestation, and climate change in Africa, introduces the GGWI Strategy and the SFMF, and identifies key areas of alignment and divergence to strengthen actions and outcomes for the continent's forests.

INTRODUCTION

Covering approximately 636 million hectares, Africa's forests account for 16% of the world's total forest cover.¹ These forests are integral to key economic sectors such as energy, forestry, agriculture, tourism, and water, while also sustaining the livelihoods of millions. They provide essential ecosystem services at local and global levels, including water and soil conservation, biodiversity protection, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. As a result, forests play a vital role in achieving the goals of the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100), African Union's (AU's) Agenda 2063, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the recently adopted UN Decade for Afforestation and Reforestation. Yet, despite their immense value, Africa had the highest annual deforestation rate globally over the period 2015 - 2020 with a loss of 4.41 million hectares.²

Africa's dryland forests face significant threats across the continent. In Northern Africa, deforestation and land degradation are driven by urbanisation, demographic shifts, global commerce, and agricultural expansion. Policies promoting the

1. FAO. 2020. Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020: Main report. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9825en>.

2. *Ibid.*

sedentarisation of nomadic pastoralists further contribute to overgrazing and land degradation.³ Western and Central Africa experience climate variability and land-use changes that disrupt water availability for vegetation and intensify land degradation. Overstocking and increased livestock production have further reduced pasture productivity and soil fertility. In Eastern Africa, rapid population growth, land conversion to cropland, overharvesting of fuelwood, wildfires, and climate change exacerbate dryland forest degradation. Policy failures and shifts away from traditional pastoralism to market-oriented livestock farming have increased pressure on dryland ecosystems. Southern Africa, though experiencing a slower decline in forest and woodland cover, faces similar challenges to the other African regions.⁴

Climate change poses a major threat to Africa's forests. Changes in species composition and forest structure are projected to reduce forest productivity, exacerbating environmental and socio-economic vulnerabilities. While various adaptation strategies exist, their effectiveness varies by region and local context. Ecosystem-based approaches, such as agroforestry,⁵ offer promising solutions for strengthening resilience to climate change. For instance, the expansion of silvopastoral systems⁶ in arid and semi-arid drylands could improve feed availability, provide shade for livestock, enhance carbon sequestration, and reduce soil erosion.⁷

Addressing the threats to Africa's dryland forests requires urgent and coordinated action to enable the continent to meet its environmental and socio-economic aspirations at multiple levels. Sustainable management of forest ecosystems through transformative interventions including processing of timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) within African territories enhanced through transfer of technologies into our countries; forest management and certification; promotion of multiple use forests and agroforestry; the creation of numerous small and medium-sized enterprises without forgetting industrial investments; the valorisation of abundant biodiversity in Africa and natural capital including investments in eco-tourism in Africa's magnificent landscapes; payments for environmental and ecosystem services as well as other innovative financing will be impactful. More so, when the processes are inclusive of local communities and Indigenous population actors the fight against poverty will yield positive outcomes, and all these should lead to local development that prioritises the three pillars of sustainable development. Policies that prioritise the conservation and sustainable use of these ecosystems must be well-aligned to ensure effective implementation and meaningful outcomes.

3. Haddad F.F., Blicharska M., Westerberg V., Riccardi T. and Costa L. 2022. Valuing, restoring and managing "presumed drylands": Cerrado, Miombo-Mopane woodlands and the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Forestry Working Paper No. 30. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0110en>.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Agroforestry is the collective name for land-use systems and technologies where woody perennials (trees, shrubs, palms, bamboos, etc.) are deliberately used on the same land management units as agricultural crops and/or animals (IPBES, n.d.).

6. Silvopastoral systems combine forestry and grazing of domesticated animals in pastures, rangelands or on-farm (FAO, 2015).

7. *Ibid.*



POLICY CONTEXT

African Union Great Green Wall Initiative Strategy and Ten-year Implementation Framework (2024-2034)

The Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI), launched by the African Union (AU) in 2007, is a transformative continental programme designed to combat the escalating challenges of land degradation, desertification, and biodiversity loss across the Sahara and Sahel regions. Initially envisioned as a continuous belt of trees to halt the expansion of the desert, the initiative has evolved into a comprehensive landscape restoration programme that integrates sustainable land management, ecosystem rehabilitation, and climate resilience strategies. Over time, the GGWI has also become more comprehensive in its geographical reach, extending beyond the original eleven member countries of the Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall (PAAGGW) to embrace a more continent-wide approach. The initiative has grown significantly, with new members from 42 countries to date, joining from North, East, Southern, and West Africa. Spearheaded by the African Union Commission's Directorate of Sustainable Environment and Blue Economy (SEBE), the GGWI sets ambitious goals, including restoring 100 million hectares of degraded land, creating 10 million jobs, and sequestering 250 million

tonnes of carbon by 2030. By improving soil fertility, enhancing biodiversity, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices to achieve sustainable land management, the GGWI works to improve the resilience of smallholder farmers, pastoralists, and Indigenous communities.

Recognising the importance of a comprehensive continental approach to tackling land degradation, desertification, biodiversity loss and climate change, and acknowledging the need for its urgent revision, the AU used an inclusive process to develop a revised framework to guide the initiative. The resulting **African Union Great Green Wall Initiative Strategy and Ten-year Implementation Framework (2024-2034)** (GGWI Strategy) and in complementarity with the 2027–2036 as the United Nations Decade for Afforestation and Reforestation promotes a more integrated and holistic approach to land rehabilitation and climate-resilient development amongst AU Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Agencies and partners. The new GGWI Strategy is founded on agreed guiding principles with a vision, objectives and four strategic intervention axes.

Strategic framework of the GGWI Strategy



VISION

By 2034, Africa's dry regions are transformed into socially, economically, and environmentally resilient and stable regions.



OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Enhance the resilience of communities, ecosystems, and economies in the African drylands by improving the living conditions of populations, improving the state and health of ecosystems, advocating and mobilising resources, strengthening institutional collaboration and promoting policy coherence.



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Promote locally led land planning, land restoration and resilience building initiatives and nature-based entrepreneurial and livelihood activities that improve the well-being and incomes of communities, as well as empower them, particularly women and youth.

Catalyse inclusion, alignment, cooperation and ownership of land restoration and resilience-building in related strategies, policies, programmes and plans.

Promote policy coherence, alignment and a common narrative in strategies, policies, programmes and plans.

Invest in, and scale up, nature-based practices and inclusive landscape approaches to sustainable land, water and biodiversity restoration and management to support resilient value chains.

Enhance Africa's capacity to mobilise resources at multiple scales.

Develop, invest in, and support, economic and environmental infrastructure facilitating the move to a green and circular economy.

Enhance the linkage and effective collaboration among community, practice, science, policy and private sector stakeholders fostering knowledge sharing and learning from experience and building upon a harmonised knowledge management system.

Encourage systems-oriented, cross-sectoral and coordinated decision-making and adaptive management environments that facilitate the integration of activities across all stakeholders, sectors and scales.

Four strategic intervention axes have been identified in the new strategy to support the achievement of the GGWI vision and objectives:



AXIS 1

Enhancing leadership, governance and political commitment



AXIS 2

Co-design and deliver pathways toward transformative restoration, resilience and development



AXIS 3

Enhancing the means of implementation for resilient landscape restoration



AXIS 4

Leveraging existing initiatives

The Sustainable Forest Management Framework for Africa

Aligned with Agenda 2063, the **AU's Sustainable Forest Management Framework for Africa (SFMF) (2020-2030)** is to guide sustainable forest management (SFM) across the continent. The SFMF was developed through a collaborative process involving AU Member States and RECs, under the coordination of the African Union Commission (AUC).

What is sustainable forest management (SFM)?

'SFM can be viewed as the sustainable use and conservation of forests with the aim of maintaining and enhancing multiple forest values through human interventions. People are at the centre of SFM because it aims to contribute to society's diverse needs in perpetuity' – AUC, 2020.⁸

The vision of the SFMF is that, by 2063: **'Africa will have zero deforestation and forest degradation and its forests will be protected, sustainably managed and restored through collaborative, cross-sectoral and transformative efforts to ensure the prosperity, food security and resilience of its people'.**

The SFMF identifies twelve prerequisites for SFM in Africa including:

- Incremental development of forest policies and institutions.
- Local communities play a leading role.
- Stability of the political environment.
- Gradual demographic changes which allow for easy planning and monitoring.
- Addressing serious biological or environmental threats.
- Secure long-term property rights.
- Adequate human and institutional capacity.
- Transparency in the development and management of forest-related businesses.
- Recognition and safeguarding of forest products and functions.
- Periodic assessment of forest resources.
- Enabling policy and legislative environments.
- Effective communication and awareness creation on forest ecosystem values.

The SFMF has five primary objectives:

- Provide strategic guidance to AU Member States and RECs on SFM.
- Facilitate continent-wide monitoring and reporting on SFM.
- Facilitate harmonisation of policies and legal frameworks across Africa.
- Serve as a basis for coordinating knowledge management, exchange of best practices and information.
- Facilitate establishment of partnerships and investments in SFM.

8. AUC. 2020. The Sustainable Forest Management Framework for Africa (2020-2030). African Union Commission (AUC).

The framework identifies five priority areas for action:

- Enhance the value of forests, sustainable production, processing, markets and trade for forest products and ecosystem services.
- Develop capacity and knowledge management for SFM.
- Develop supportive policies and institutional frameworks for SFM.
- Restore degraded forests and landscapes for building resilience and sustainable livelihoods.
- Build partnerships and mobilise resources for achieving SFM.

Each priority area includes a specific objective, desired outcomes, major intervention areas (actions), indicators, responsible implementers, and supporting partners.

SAFEGUARDING AFRICA'S FORESTS THROUGH THE GGWI STRATEGY AND ITS ALIGNMENT WITH THE SMSF

Key Intervention Areas of the GGWI Strategy Which Contribute to Sustainable Forest Management

The GGWI Strategy offers key intervention and action areas to enhance SFM in Africa including enhancing governance and political commitment; increasing inclusive decision making and community participation; promoting tree-based landscape restoration approaches; ensuring capacity development and knowledge exchange; strengthening markets and investments in nature-based value chains; and improving implementation through resource mobilisation and partnerships. These strategic interventions are elaborated on below.

ENHANCING LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, AND POLITICAL COMMITMENT

A key pillar of the GGWI Strategy is fostering governance structures that integrate land restoration efforts, including tree-based initiatives, into national and international policies. The initiative aligns with multilateral environmental agreements including the SDGs, Agenda 2063, the UNCCD, the UNFCCC, and the CBD. By mapping ecosystem resilience leverage points at various governance levels, the GGWI Strategy promotes policy coherence and garners support for integrated action for SFM.

Moreover, the initiative strengthens cross-sectoral collaboration – between the environment, land, water, forest, agriculture, education, finance, and planning sectors - at multiple levels such as among ministries, local authorities, and public service entities. This creates an enabling environment conducive to integrated on-the-ground action on SFM.



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The alarming rate of global deforestation underscores the urgent need for unified action, making the 2027-2036 the United Nations Decade for Afforestation and Reforestation a crucial step. It aligns perfectly with the outcomes of the International Conference on Afforestation and Deforestation held in Brazzaville, Congo, in 2024. It is also aligned with the spirit and objectives of the AU GGWI Strategy. The decade on Afforestation and Reforestation provides a powerful framework to galvanise the necessary support and resources to accelerate our GGW's ten-year journey towards a greener, more resilient Africa. By working together, we can achieve transformative change for our forests and our people”

H.E. Dr Rosalie Matondo, Minister of Forest Economy, Republic of Congo.

INCREASING INCLUSIVE DECISION MAKING AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Inclusive leadership and local participation are central to SFM. The GGWI Strategy actively involves forest-dwelling communities, smallholder farmers, and pastoralists in natural resource management, recognising them as key stakeholders. Further, the GGWI Strategy actively involves women, youth, and marginalised groups in decision-making processes recognising their critical role in sustainable land management. Through capacity development and knowledge exchange, the GGWI Strategy builds competencies in engagement and facilitation skills, ensuring that all local actors are equipped to participate in decision-making processes and manage their landscapes sustainably. Securing land tenure rights, fostering participatory land-use planning, and adopting adaptive management principles enhances the resilience of rural communities in the face of climate change. By ensuring that community groups have the technical and planning skills necessary to manage their land, including forests, in a sustainable way, the GGWI Strategy fosters long-term stewardship.

PROMOTING TREE-BASED LANDSCAPE RESTORATION APPROACHES

Landscape restoration is at the core of the GGWI. The GGWI Strategy promotes the integration of trees and shrubs through approaches such as agroforestry, evergreen agriculture, agrisilvicultural and silvopastoral systems, farmer-managed natural regeneration, home gardening with trees, and tree planting to restore degraded lands. These practices provide a multitude of environmental and socio-economic benefits such as enhanced soil health, erosion control, soil water retention, improved biodiversity, livelihood diversification and income generation, improved nutrition and food production, carbon sequestration, better pasture quality, and shade for livestock. Further, these tree-based restoration efforts contribute to ecosystem stability, making agricultural and forested landscapes, as well as the communities dependent upon them, more resilient to extreme weather events such as floods and droughts.

ENSURING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Education, technical training and knowledge sharing is critical to the uptake of forest conservation and land restoration efforts. The GGWI Strategy integrates land restoration approaches, including tree-based interventions, into school curriculums and professional training programmes. It develops toolkits, training modules, and networking platforms for knowledge-sharing among farmers, pastoralists, forest-dwellers and land managers.

The GGWI Strategy encourages the development of policy and solutions based on evidence and the needs of local actors. Integrating scientific, practitioner and local and indigenous knowledge and focusing on the needs of local communities ensures the long-term sustainability of land restoration and forest management interventions. Policymakers engage directly with communities to understand their restoration

needs and efforts and develop policies that support sustainable land use. In addition, the establishment of platforms for cross-sectoral dialogue improve knowledge sharing and policy alignment and maximise the visibility and impact of land restoration, including SFM, efforts.

STRENGTHENING MARKETS AND INVESTMENTS IN NATURE-BASED VALUE CHAINS

To reinforce local economies, the GGWI Strategy strengthens markets for NTFPs and nature-based value chains. It deploys technologies such as remote sensing, land health surveillance, and Fintech to assess ecosystem services and create incentives for land stewards. By compensating communities for protecting and restoring land, including forests, the GGWI Strategy aligns economic development with environmental sustainability.

IMPROVING IMPLEMENTATION THROUGH RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

The GGWI Strategy emphasises the need to leverage partnerships with various stakeholders, including governments, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, and international partners to access technical and financial resources to maximise outcomes. Strategic interventions include mobilising funding by leveraging corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes and improving access to green bonds, impact investments, and payments for ecosystem services. Additionally, the GGWI Strategy identifies existing and upcoming initiatives and organisations with strong SFM components to partner with to maximise synergies and ultimately impacts in key outcome areas. Some examples of programmes and organisations that can enhance sustainable forest management outcomes include the EverGreening the Earth Campaign, Bonn Challenge, African Resilient Landscape Initiative (ARLI), Sustainable Forest Management Impact Programme on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes, One Billion Trees for Africa, and Tree Aid.

Faith-based organisations, civil society, and non-governmental organisations play a crucial role in local engagement. Through partnerships with religious and community leaders, the GGWI Strategy enhances advocacy efforts, mobilises grassroots participation, and strengthens community-driven forest restoration.

Areas of Alignment and Divergence Between the GGWI Strategy and the SFMF

Although the GGWI Strategy and SFMF are aligned in their goals relating to ecosystem restoration and resilience, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and rural livelihood and community empowerment, they differ in their ecological scope, sectoral entry points, financial visibility and carbon finance readiness.

AREAS OF ALIGNMENT



Ecosystem restoration and resilience

Both the GGWI Strategy and the SFMF place ecosystem restoration at the centre of their mandates. The GGWI targets the restoration of 100 million hectares of degraded land while the SFMF emphasises forest ecosystem restoration through sustainable forest management practices **including afforestation, reforestation, and agroforestry interventions**.



Policy implication: Shared emphasis on ecosystem restoration provides a solid foundation for harmonised technical guidelines, knowledge exchange, and joint monitoring indicators.



Climate change adaptation and mitigation

The GGWI Strategy includes climate resilience as a core objective, aiming to improve adaptive capacity in vulnerable communities. The SFMF promotes forests as nature-based solutions for climate change, carbon sequestration, and adaptation strategies. The two frameworks recognise the dual role of land and forests in climate change mitigation and resilience-building. Both call for nature-based solutions that reduce emissions and buffer vulnerable communities against climate shocks.



Policy implication: Integrated climate-smart strategies that span both drylands and forest zones can optimise carbon storage, support national adaptation plans and enhance the resilience of rural communities.



Livelihoods and community empowerment

Both the GGWI Strategy and the SFMF highlight the critical role of sustainable land and forest use in enhancing rural livelihoods. The GGWI Strategy places strong emphasis on socio-economic development, particularly through the creation of green jobs, youth and women empowerment, and improved food security. Similarly, the SFMF prioritises community-based forest management and equitable benefit-sharing to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. While the GGWI aims to generate 10 million jobs through green value chains, the SFMF supports forest-based enterprises and community forestry initiatives. Together, these frameworks adopt inclusive people-centred approaches that promote sustainable and resilient livelihoods across the region.



Policy implication: Co-development of inclusive community-centred livelihood models can strengthen social buy-in, enhance gender equality and reduce land-use conflicts.



Institutional strengthening and governance

The GGWI Strategy and the SFMF call for strong institutional frameworks, capacity building, policy coherence, and regional cooperation. Both the frameworks recognise weak governance structures as a barrier to effective implementation.



Policy implication: Regional policy dialogue platforms (e.g. PAAGGW, African Forest Forum) should be leveraged for improved cross-sectoral planning and coherence.



Regional cooperation and continental integration

The GGWI and SFMF are both aligned with Agenda 2063 and are intended to be operationalised across multiple countries through shared platforms and regional partnerships.



Policy implication: Existing continental institutions should be empowered to facilitate data sharing, joint investments, and cross-border project alignment.

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE



Geographic and ecological scope

Initially focused on the Sahara and Sahel regions, the GGWI has expanded beyond its original 11 member countries to embrace a more continent-wide approach to restoring degraded dryland areas – this aligns with the pan-African scope of the SFMF. However, the SFMF maintains a broader ecological mandate, encompassing not only dryland forests but also tropical, montane and mangrove forest ecosystems.



Policy implication: Develop a continental land-use coordination framework that aligns interventions across ecological zones, including dryland-forest transition zones.



Strategic entry points

The GGWI adopts an integrated land-use approach combining agriculture, restoration, and water management. The SFMF is more sectoral, focusing on forest ecosystems, forest governance, and associated value chains. However, it identifies the need to synchronise policies across all production sectors (e.g. agriculture, energy, water and land sectors) and to establish a common platform to discuss challenges and align plans.



Policy implication: Promote cross-sectoral dialogue and integrated national strategies, ensuring coherence between ministries (e.g. Environment, Energy, Water, Agriculture, Forestry).





Carbon credit mechanisms

The GGWI has begun to engage with carbon markets through the GGW Accelerator Programme. However, it still lacks a consolidated and strategic approach to accessing carbon credits. The proposed GGW Carbon Bank, which is envisioned to integrate innovative financial mechanisms such as payments for ecosystem services, debt-for-nature swaps, green and sustainability-linked bonds, and returns on ecosystem services, has yet to be fully operationalised. The SFMF emphasises the development of national carbon funds that can be leveraged to support sustainable forest management and encourages engagement with a broad range of international climate finance mechanisms such as REDD+,⁹ the Clean Development Mechanism and the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility. Importantly, the SFMF highlights the need to strengthen institutional frameworks to govern carbon markets and ensure fair and transparent benefit-sharing with local communities.



Policy implication: Establish a unified carbon credit framework that incorporates both dryland and forest ecosystems, with harmonised monitoring, reporting and verification protocols and equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms.



Financing instruments

The GGWI includes partnerships with international donors and has a strong investment-driven model to raise \$33 billion for land restoration. The SFMF emphasises technical guidelines and best practices for forest management, working through national forestry departments and the African Forest and Wildlife Commission. The GGWI is more investment-intensive with a broader multi-sectoral approach; SFMF is more technical and sector-specific and lacks a similarly visible and consolidated financing platform.



Policy implication: Advocate for a unified financing facility or coordinated donor strategy that supports both dryland restoration and SFM.



Timeframe and strategic maturity

The GGWI Strategy runs from 2024 to 2034 and the SFMF spans 2020 to 2030. The different timelines may create challenges for synchronised reporting and funding mechanisms.



Policy implication: Align milestones and reporting cycles as far as possible to enhance synchronisation and joint tracking of restoration outcomes across both frameworks.

9. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks)



Table 1 below highlights the linkages between the intervention and action areas on sustainable forest management within the GGWI Strategy and the SFMF.

Table 1. Alignment between the GGWI Strategy and the SFMF intervention areas and priority actions

GREAT GREEN WALL INITIATIVE STRATEGY (GGWI)	SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK (SFMF)
<p>Strategic Intervention Axis 1: Enhancing leadership, governance and political commitment</p>	<p>Strategic Intervention Axis 1: Strengthening Governance and Policy</p>
<p><u>Intervention Area 1.3: Position, align and integrate Great Green Wall efforts within inter-related policies, mandates and commitments across nested scales</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At the global and continental levels, map the ecosystem and livelihood resilience leverage points of the GGW to i) multilateral environmental agreements and the SDGs; ii) Agenda 2063; iii) African Common Platform on Food System; and iv) other related policies and strategies of AU Agencies. At national levels, map the ecosystem restoration and livelihood resilience leverage points associated with national-level commitments within the UNCCD, UNCBD and UNFCCC. At the national, subnational and local levels, communicate the interrelationships among commitments and targets, and support integrated actions. 	<p><u>Objective 3. Strengthen the political and institutional frameworks of member states and regional economic communities to achieve SFM in Africa</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis and compilation of national forest regulations and policies and their harmonisation with international and regional SFM treaties and agreements. Adaptation and harmonisation of national and sub-regional forest policies and regulatory frameworks to support SFM. Integration of tenure and livelihood security policies and strategies in sustainable development projects and programmes. Creating synergies between other sectoral policies and regulatory frameworks.
<p><u>Intervention Area 1.4: Deepen and broaden collaboration among diverse partnerships for resilience within and across different scales</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The GGW entities, relevant line ministries and local authorities should coordinate their work to design and facilitate public services that help pursue GGW objectives, with a particular stress on bodies affecting agricultural, pastoral and forestry activities, water resources as well as schools. 	<p><u>Objective 3. Strengthen the political and institutional frameworks of member states and regional economic communities to achieve SFM in Africa</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating synergies between other sectoral policies and regulatory frameworks.



GREAT GREEN WALL INITIATIVE STRATEGY (GGWI)	SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK (SFMF)
<p>Strategic Intervention Axis 2: Co-design and deliver pathways toward transformative restoration, resilience and development</p>	<p>Priority 4: Restoration of degraded forests and landscapes</p>
<p><u>Intervention Area 2.1: Bundle administrative, scientific and implementation and engagement capacities to tailor and scale landscape restoration and the management of ecosystems</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote greater coherence and improve mutually reinforcing linkages among agriculture, forestland health as well as ecosystem management at different scales: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on land and soil health and productivity to build resilience. • Ensure the empowerment of land users and communities, especially the disenfranchised by providing the skills, tools and resources. • Develop core competencies in engagement and facilitation skills at the local level. • Build upon existing or create mechanisms for nested participatory landscape, watershed and land use resilience planning across scales. • Promote integrated natural resource management. • Secure mechanisms for inclusive land, tree, water and other resources governance. • Build forward-looking locally led climate resilience and disaster preparedness plans. • Adopt governance principles of adaptive management. 	<p><u>Objective 4. To reduce deforestation, forest and land degradation and restore forests and landscapes for enhancing resilience and sustainable livelihoods</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the rate of deforestation at the regional and national levels. • Identify and analyse the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and develop strategies for addressing them. • Promote and protect community rights and forest tenure security to support their participation in SFM. • Create a conducive environment to facilitate private sector engagement in forest certification. • Undertake comprehensive participatory assessments of restoration needs and opportunities at the national and regional levels. • Promote the implementation of community forestry practices. • Identity and share information on cost-effective restoration approaches and strategies (e.g. assisted natural regeneration, planting, enrichment planting and sustainable management). • Capacity building of all stakeholders on new approaches and strategies of restoration of degraded forests and landscapes.

GREAT GREEN WALL INITIATIVE STRATEGY (GGWI)	SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK (SFMF)
<p><u>Intervention Area 2.3: Invest in integrated value chains and employment that promote land health, effective water cycles and biological diversity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote and fortify capacities and competencies for integrated landscape and farming systems management based on agroecological, nature positive, greening and smart practices that contribute to sustainable nutrient, water, soil health, productivity, and above and below ground biological diversity. This includes holistic grazing management, composting, soil and water conservation practices, agroforestry, silvopastoral systems, crop rotations, and seedbanks, among others). Promote nature-based (tree, crop, plant) value chains to support livelihoods, as well as nutrition, soil health and ecosystem health. Enhance the markets for NTFPs to strengthen the commitment of populations to protect their natural resources. Deploy remote sensing, land health surveillance, fintech and other technologies to estimate the value of, and offer payments for the environmental services provided, and reward farmers, pastoralists, forest managers and local communities for stewarding and protecting ecosystems. 	<p>Priority 1: Enhancement of the value of forests and the sustainable production, processing, marketing's and trade for forest products and ecosystem services</p> <p><u>Objective 1. Enhance the recognition of the diverse values of forests and trees outside forests and the sustainable production, processing, marketing and trade for forest products and ecosystem services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct assessments and studies to show the monetary, social, cultural, and environmental values of forests and trees outside forests to improve the recognition by national policy and decision-makers. Raising awareness of, and advocating for, forests and the contributions of SFM to the green economy, sustainable cities, urban and rural livelihoods and resilient landscapes for food security, nutrition, energy, peace and stability in Africa. Develop market information system. Develop capacity for sustainable forest production and marketing. Disseminate, and train on, adaptive best practices. Cultivate interest and investment in forest areas. Conduct studies on existing value chains. Identify and act on the opportunities internally and externally.
<p><u>Intervention Area 2.7: Invest in coordinated scientific and experience-based support and the creation of a common monitoring framework</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree on a common list of social, economic and ecosystem health indicators for process, impact and behaviour change including - Biophysical: above- and below-ground carbon. 	<p>Priority 3: Political and institutional framework for Sustainable Forest Management</p> <p><u>Objective 3. Strengthen the political and institutional frameworks of member states and regional economic communities to achieve SFM in Africa</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening institutional frameworks to support forest carbon governance and operationalise mechanisms for sharing benefits with local communities.

GREAT GREEN WALL INITIATIVE STRATEGY (GGWI)	SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK (SFMF)
<p>Strategic Intervention Axis 3: Enhancing the implementation of resilient landscape restoration through resource mobilisation, partnerships, inclusion, knowledge exchange and capacity development</p>	<p>Priority 3: Political and institutional framework for Sustainable Forest Management</p>
<p><u>Intervention Area 5.3.1: Enhance finance flows and resource mobilisation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AUC should develop a resources mobilisation strategy focused on the principle of 'Africa taking full responsibility for financing the Initiative' and tapping into traditional, innovative and carbon resources. • Encourage the application of ESG frameworks to undertake evaluation of business-level carbon and social footprints. 	<p><u>Objective 3. Strengthen the political and institutional frameworks of member states and regional economic communities to achieve SFM in Africa</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening institutional frameworks to support forest carbon governance and operationalise mechanisms for sharing benefits with local communities.
<p><u>Intervention Area 3.2: Develop creative partnerships and effective coordination</u></p> <p><i>Partnerships among market, public and civil sectors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and take advantage of impact investing, green bonds, sustainable agriculture, pastoral and forest investments, and payments for ecosystem services. 	<p>Priority 5: Enhanced partnerships and resource mobilisation for achieving SFM</p> <p><u>Objective 5. To establish strong partnerships and collaboration for mobilising resources through a robust information and communication system</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop or strengthen national strategies for resources mobilisation • Support local communities and organisations to access the local, national, regional and international funds. • Encourage the private sector to create economic, social and environmental benefits into their business plans. • Strengthen access to information related to funding opportunities. • Establish information system on available funding opportunities.
<p><u>Intervention Area 3.2: Develop creative partnerships and effective coordination</u></p> <p><i>Partnerships and coordination among different sectors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The intentional coordination across government sectors on common and related desired outcomes can lead to effective co-planning, co-decision making, co-implementation, and joint monitoring and reporting. Key sectors include environment, land, water, forest, agriculture, livestock, gender and youth, education, finance, planning, among others. • Encourage integrated systems and cross-sectoral approaches among ministries and focal points. • Use root cause analyses to understand deeper issues and contributions, roles and responsibilities of different sectors. • Create formal mechanisms for knowledge sharing. • Synergise reporting efforts among ministries and focal points that simultaneously contribute to UNCCD, UNCBD, and UNFCCC, Agenda 2063 and SDGs. • Create cross-sectoral platforms at national and subnational levels. 	

GREAT GREEN WALL INITIATIVE STRATEGY (GGWI)	SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK (SFMF)
<p><u>Intervention Area 3.2: Develop creative partnerships and effective coordination</u></p> <p><i>Partnering with faith-based organisations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directly work with faith leaders of different faiths, as appropriate, in resilient landscape efforts at national, subnational and community levels. • Work directly with civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations that are faith-based and focused on landscape restoration, resilience, and watershed management. 	<p>Priority 5: Enhanced partnerships and resource mobilisation for achieving SFM</p> <p><u>Objective 5. To establish strong partnerships and collaboration for mobilising resources through a robust information and communication system</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and support the involvement of non-governmental and community-based organisations.
<p><u>Intervention Area 3.3: Ensure inclusive leadership and participation, especially of women and youth</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively addressing the engagement of women and youth is important when working at a local scale with diverse farmers, pastoralists, forest-dwellers and other land managers. • Ensure community groups with diverse gender and age membership that are managing natural resources, agricultural, pastoral or forested landscapes have the combined technical and planning, management and monitoring skills. 	<p>Priority 2: Capacity Development and Knowledge management for SFM</p> <p><u>Objective 2. To improve capacity and knowledge for sustainable forest management by the year 2030</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement plans and mechanisms to ensure the dissemination and use of forest monitoring and assessment by different actors and sectors. • Assess capacity gaps of local communities in and around forests and protected areas and undertake targeted capacity development for wider community involvement in SFM. • Develop or improve existing mechanisms for the participatory monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of forest-related policies, programmes, plans, projects and strategies. • Assess capacity development needs of local producer organisations and communities. • Develop and implement capacity building strategies and programmes for local organisations and communities to participate in SFM. <p>Priority 5. Enhanced partnerships and resource mobilisation for achieving SFM</p> <p><u>Objective 5. To establish strong partnerships and collaboration for mobilising resources through a robust information and communication system</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the capacity of vulnerable groups (women, youth, indigenous communities) to present competitive proposals to attract funds.

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<p><u>Intervention Area 3.4: Capacity development and knowledge exchange based on skills building and behavioural change</u></p> <p><i>Formal education</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where applicable, integrate practicums and exercises related to home gardens, nurseries, agroforestry, pastoral and silvopastoral systems, and management of forests. <p><i>Local technical skills development</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toolkits and menu-based training can offer men, women and youth farmers, pastoralists and forest dwellers opportunities to build on local knowledge, experience and evidence. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out an assessment of training approaches and modules. Elaborate, as needed, a consolidated menu-based toolkit for local level capacity development. Create a networking platform of trainers. Carry out training on comparable local level monitoring frameworks. Carry out training for the development of locally led advocacy plans. Promote expos and field days for farmers, pastoralists and other land managers. 	<p>Priority 2: Capacity Development and Knowledge management for SFM</p> <p><u>Objective 2. To improve capacity and knowledge for sustainable forest management by the year 2030</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess capacity gaps of local communities in and around forests and protected areas and undertake targeted capacity development for wider community involvement in SFM. Develop or improve existing mechanisms for the participatory monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of forest-related policies, programmes, plans, projects and strategies. Assess existing capacities, capacity needs and opportunities of institutions and organisations in the forest sector in support of SFM in all forest types. Assess capacity development needs of local producer organisations and communities. Develop and implement capacity building strategies and programmes for local organisations and communities to participate in SFM. Compile, analyse and disseminate SFM good practices, tools and success stories in Africa and elsewhere using country-level, sub regional and regional platforms and other tools. Introduce the principles and practices of SFM to relevant institutions and organisations at all levels of governance.
<p><u>Intervention Area 3.6: Develop effective communications, advocacy approaches and visibility</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an advocacy plan that includes bringing policymakers from regional, national and subnational levels into dialogue with farmers, pastoralists and forest-dwellers to understand their successful efforts and to underscore why enabling policies and bylaws are needed. 	
<p>Strategic Axis 4: Leveraging existing efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage existing and upcoming efforts, initiatives and strategies that can be capitalised upon and that can readily contribute to GGW goals and objectives and with which the GGW should work closely for effective coordination and synergies such as: The United Nations Decade for Afforestation and Reforestation (2027–2036) is a newly established global initiative aimed at combating deforestation and promoting sustainable forest management worldwide. While the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030) encompasses a broad range of ecosystems, the UN Decade for Afforestation and Reforestation specifically targets forest ecosystems. This focused approach aims to build upon and complement existing restoration efforts by providing dedicated attention and resources to forest-related challenges and opportunities. 	<p><i>No specific action area – covered in 'Part IV. Opportunities for implementing the SFMF'</i></p>

GREAT GREEN WALL INITIATIVE STRATEGY (GGWI)	SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK (SFMF)
<p>Strategic Axis 4: Leveraging existing efforts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EverGreening the Earth Campaign, Bonn Challenge, African Resilient Landscape Initiative (ARLI), Food Systems, Land Use, and Restoration Impact Programme (FOLUR), Dryland Sustainable Landscapes, Sustainable Forest Management Impact Programme on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes, Green Climate Fund (GCF), One Billion Trees for Africa, and Tree Aid, among others. 	<p><i>No specific action area – covered in 'Part IV. Opportunities for implementing the SFMF'</i></p>

CONCLUSION

Both the GGWI Strategy and SFMF are critical instruments in Africa's sustainable development toolkit. The GGWI Strategy's tree-based land restoration interventions and actions for an effective enabling environment including improved governance, inclusive participation, cross-sectoral collaboration, strengthened partnerships, and increased financial investment strengthen the continent's approach to SFM.

Alignment of the GGWI Strategy and the SFMF around ecosystem restoration, boosting rural livelihoods, and enhancing climate resilience presents a unique opportunity for synergies. However, differences in ecological scope, sectoral focus, and finance visibility, as well as the need for improved access to carbon finance, should be addressed through intentional policy coherence, integrated planning, and coordinated investment strategies. It is recommended that AU organs, RECs, and implementing agencies establish a joint task force to align implementation plans, financing streams, and monitoring systems, ensuring maximum impact from both frameworks.

Aligning the GGWI Strategy and the SFMF will not only safeguard Africa's forests but will accelerate positive outcomes in other target areas of the GGWI and global commitments such as poverty alleviation, increased biodiversity richness, strengthened food security, and bolstered climate resilience.



Access the new GGWI Strategy here:



For additional information about the meeting and how you could get involved, please contact:

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