The Future of Forests: REDD+ Readiness

Dr. Jane Mutune presents on the Role of Forests in climate change during the seminar on the Future of Forests; REDD+ Readiness held at the Wangari Maathai Institute on November 27, 2019

The Wangari Maathai Institute (WMI) hosted a seminar on the "Future of Forests; REDD+ Readiness" on November 27, 2019. The seminar was delivered by Prof. Nzioka J. Muthama, Deputy director, WMI, Dr. Jane Mutune and Dr. Bessy Kathambi and attracted a wide range of participants including students, staff, policy experts and practitioners among others. The seminar introduced participants on the REDD+ process in Kenya and where the country is, regarding the implementation of REDD+.

REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries) aims at mitigating climate change by reducing net emissions of greenhouse gases through enhanced forest management in developing countries. It involves payments to developing countries that prevent deforestation or degradation that would otherwise have taken place. REDD+ takes a phase approach with three phases - Readiness, Implementation and Result Based Action. Kenya is at the Readiness phase.

In her presentation, Dr. Mutune noted that forests are a key adaptation strategy to climate change mitigation because of their role as carbon sinks. She highlighted the existing mitigation opportunities in the country which include participatory approach (good governance), afforestation and re-afforestation. She emphasized that in developing a national strategy plan for REDD+ there ought to be a consideration of indigenous people, gender and full participation of relevant stakeholders. Dr. Kathambi gave insights into the Forest Reference Emission Level/Forest Reference Level, an element required for REDD+ readiness. She

pointed outed that forest cover has been on the decline over the recent years due to increased demand for farmland and settlement. Kenya has five water towers which if properly managed can form a good carbon reduction. She discussed case studies of Ghana and Brazil as some of the success examples of the REDD+ program. Prof. Muthama wrapped up the presentation sessions by a presentation on REDD+ safeguards and safeguard information systems. REDD+ safeguards ensure no harm from REDD+ activities and aim to enhance social and environmental benefits. He emphasized the importance of having an accessible safeguard information system and the vital role of research and information in moving to the next phase of REDD+.

Participants took turn to react to the presentations and key issues in the discussion included the role of leadership in REDD+, participatory forest governance and the opportunities for REDD+.