

DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR THE AFRICA REGIONAL MOUNTAINS FORUM

***A Platform for Knowledge, Information Exchange and
Policy Dialogue for the Mountain Agenda in Africa***



ARTICLE I

I. Background and History

Mountains provide a wide range of critical and indispensable ecological goods and services for a significant number of people in Africa both upstream and downstream. However, they are among the most disadvantaged regions in the world with some of the highest poverty rates. Mountain communities and ecosystems are among those most vulnerable to climate change and land degradation, irrespective of the international focus on recognition of mountains in key policy processes at both national and International levels as important ecosystems for human well-being and livelihoods.

1. At International Level

In **1992**, during the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED or 'Rio Earth Summit') Heads of Governments of the world biggest nations signed a plan for action, '**Agenda 21**'. Chapter 13 entitled 'Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Sustainable Mountain Development', attached major importance to mountains.

In **1998**, the UN General Assembly declared 2002 as the International Year of Mountains and since then, the International Mountain Day is celebrated on the 11th December each year, with many activities recognising the diverse values of mountains and the need for promoting Sustainable Mountain Development.

In **2002**, there was a need for a formal global governance structure for mountains and consequently, a Type-2 Partnership (The Mountain Partnership) was launched by Italy, Switzerland, FAO (hosts the secretariat) and UNEP in Johannesburg. The Mountain Partnership is a voluntary trans-national alliance between governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and private organizations who collaborate to meet specific goals related to mountains globally.

In **2012** (20 years after the Rio Earth Summit), at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, mountains and their communities received renewed global political attention and three paragraphs (210, 211, 212) of the UNCSD's Outcome Document entitled the "Future We Want", were entirely dedicated to mountains:

- a. *210. We recognize that the benefits derived from mountain regions are essential for sustainable development. Mountain ecosystems play a crucial role in providing water resources to a large portion of the world's population; fragile mountain ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, deforestation and forest*

degradation, land use change, land degradation and natural disasters; and mountain glaciers around the world are retreating and getting thinner, with increasing impacts on the environment and human well-being.

- b. 211. We further recognize that mountains are often home to communities, including indigenous peoples and local communities, who have developed sustainable uses of mountain resources. These communities are, however, often marginalized, and we therefore stress that continued effort will be required to address poverty, food security and nutrition, social exclusion and environmental degradation in these areas. We invite States to strengthen cooperative action with effective involvement and sharing of experience of all relevant stakeholders, by strengthening existing arrangements, agreements and centres of excellence for sustainable mountain development, as well as exploring new arrangements and agreements, as appropriate.*
- c. 212. We call for greater efforts towards the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity. We encourage States to adopt a long-term vision and holistic approaches, including through incorporating mountain-specific policies into national sustainable development strategies, which could include, inter alia, poverty reduction plans and programmes for mountain areas, particularly in developing countries. In this regard, we call for international support for sustainable mountain development in developing countries.*

Following a vigorous advocacy campaign by Mountain Partnership members to build a greater understanding of the critical role of mountain ecosystems for sustainable development, the UN adopted three mountain-related targets in its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The three mountain related targets come under two of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 6 (Water and Sanitation), target 6.6. and SDG 15 (Life on land), Target 15.1 and Target 15.4.

2. At Africa Regional Level

These above paragraphs inspired interest from many players and actors globally and particularly in Africa.

In **2013**, the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS Network), in collaboration with the Mountain Partnership Secretariat organised a meeting for Mountain Partnership Members in Kigali, Rwanda, during which the Africa Mountain Partnership Champions Committee (AMPCC) was established with the aim of revitalising the activities of the Mountain Partnership in the African region and ARCOS was designated as Secretariat.

Since 2014, ARCOS and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) engaged a partnership, and ARCOS acts as the African Hub for a global programme called “Sustainable

Mountain Development for Global Change (SMD4GC). The overall goal of the SMD4GC programme is to contribute to Sustainable Mountain Development under uncertain changes in climatic, environmental and socio-economic conditions, focussing on poverty and risk reduction.

One of the key achievements under the SMD4GC programme is the First Africa Regional Mountains Forum (ARMF-2014) organised by ARCOS and partners in October 2014 in Arusha, Tanzania under the broad theme *“Towards a Shared Mountain Agenda for Africa”*. The 1stARMF brought together both African Mountain Partnership Members and non- Members from governments, international organizations, civil society, science, academia and privatesector to share experiences and lessons on SMD and identify major issues affecting African Mountains. It provided a platform for stakeholders to propose actions to address the challenges for advancing the African mountain agenda.

The First Africa Regional Mountains Forum made the following recommendations among others:

- *The Forum proposed the establishment of the Africa Regional Mountains Forum to promote the SMD agenda and strategy in Africa and to provide a forum of knowledge, information exchange and policy dialogue in close cooperation with the Mountain Partnership.*
- *The Forum acknowledged the African Mountain Partnership Champions Committee and proposed that it acts as a Steering Committee of the ARMF and propose that the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) acts as an interim Secretariat and centre of excellence pending further inter-governmental consultations and conclusions on the establishment of a permanent institutional arrangement.*
- *The Forum further proposed that the Africa Regional Mountains Forum be convened every 2 years depending on the modalities developed by the Secretariat to promote the African mountain agenda.*

The ARMF was officially endorsed by the AMCEN in Cairo in March 2015 as indicated below; *“We, African ministers of the environment, welcoming the Arusha Outcomes, the main findings and recommendations of the 1stAfrican Regional Mountains Forum, organized by the Albertine Rift Conservation Society, the Africa Mountain Partnership Champions Committee, the East African Community, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Austrian Development Cooperation and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Arusha from 22 to 24 October 2014”, Hereby declare our resolve:*

- *“To agree to establish and strengthen institutional arrangements for SMD, including centres of excellence, and to strengthen the ARMF as a forum of knowledge,*

information exchange and policy dialogue” Cairo Declaration on Managing Africa’s Natural Capital for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication.

The institutionalisation of the ARMF by the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment provides a solid official framework for coordinating activities related to knowledge management, information exchange and policy dialogue for sustainable mountain development in Africa.

ARTICLE 2

Name and Establishment

I. NAME AND ESTABLISHMENT

The organisation is known as the Africa Regional Mountains Forum (hereinafter abbreviated as “ARMF”).

ARMF is a voluntary partnership of governments, civil society organizations and professional associations, private sector as well as individuals (as Affiliate members), who share the pursuit and commitment to the sustainable management, use and conservation of mountain ecosystems for the betterment of the socio-economic wellbeing of its people, for the stability and improvement of its environment.

Reflecting the spirit of a Type-II Partnership¹, ARMF is a non-political, objective, independent and not-for-profit international organisation.

ARMF is autonomous and enjoys professional, administrative and financial independence in the discharge of its functions.

The Secretariat of ARMF is hosted by the Albertine Rift Conservation Society (ARCOS) under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Uganda. ARCOS is legally registered in Uganda under the provisions of The Non-Governmental Organizations Registration Act, Cap. 113.

¹Type-II Partnership concept was developed at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development of 2002 as mechanism to facilitate the inclusion of government, civil society and private sector actors in the implementation of sustainable development.

ARTICLE 3

Interpretation

I. GENERAL

- a. Any reference to this Constitution shall include any amendments or modifications thereto as may be made thereunder after the date on which this Constitution enters into force.
- b. Words signifying the singular number only shall include the plural number and vice versa. Words importing the masculine gender include the feminine gender. The use of headings in this Constitution is for convenience of reference only.
- c. The headings do not confer any special meaning or emphasis whatsoever and this Constitution is to be read in its entirety. This Constitution is divided into Articles, paragraphs, sub-paragraphs and clauses, in hierarchical order.

2. DEFINITIONS

Except where the context otherwise requires, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

“ARMF” means African Regional Mountain Forum which is established under this Constitution; hereinafter, abbreviated as ARMF.

“Member” means any person party to this Constitution and any person who joins ARMF in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution;

“Person” means a natural person.

“Chair and Vice Chair of the ARMF Forum” shall mean the persons elected by the Governing Council in accordance with Article 5 (2) (b) of the Constitution to be Chair and Vice Chair of the Members’ Forum.

“Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Council” shall mean persons elected by the Governing Council to be Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Council.

“ARMF Coordinator” shall mean the ARMF Secretariat staff appointed in accordance with Article 6 of this Constitution.

ARTICLE 4

Vision, Mission and Objectives

I. VISION

An African with inclusive engagement in Sustainable Mountain Development.

2. MISSION

The mission of the ARMF is to promote Sustainable Mountain Development in Africa through capacity building, knowledge generation, information exchange, collective action and policy dialogue.

3. OBJECTIVES

- a. Generate knowledge, mobilise resources and increase understanding o Sustainable Mountain Development in Africa;
- b. Facilitate sharing of SMD-related Information amongst Stakeholders and partners in Africa;
- c. Build a multi stakeholder advocacy network for promoting SMD through national, regional and global processes;
- d. Support capacity building, development and south-south cooperation for improved SMD in Africa;
- e. Promote innovative actions, sustainable practices and traditional knowledge in African mountain areas and;
- f. To do such other things reasonable incidental to the execution of the objectives contained herein.

ARTICLE 5

Membership and Governance

I. MEMBERSHIP

a. Membership Acquisition

Membership to the ARMF is open to African governments, inter-governmental, civil society and private organizations and individuals (as Affiliate members) that are actively engaged in

Sustainable Mountain Development, are interested in helping the Forum achieve its objectives and are willing to abide by the rules of the ARMF.

Membership to the ARMF is acquired upon application submitted the ARMF Secretariat for approval by the Governing Council.

ARMF members are required to indicate their commitment and contribution to ARMF activities which can be financial, in-kind contributions, or both -the form of which is at the discretion of each member. Strategy for financial commitments from ARMF Members shall be developed to ensure core operations of the ARMF.

ARMF membership requirements, rules and regulations related to membership is set by the Governing Council and is liable to review at the General Assembly (GA) of the ARMF.

b. Membership Categories

-Ordinary members

- Affiliates

- Honorary

c. General Membership Benefits

- Involvement in membership programme design, planning and implementation;
- Regular updates of ARMF activities and accomplishments;
- Discount to regional conferences;
- Invitation to capacity building courses and workshops;
- Participation in ARMF Regional events;
- Access to ARMF Reports, Newsletters and other relevant publications;
- Opportunity for networking with a wide community of experts in SMD.

d. Expectations from ARMF Members

Apart from voluntary financial contribution, ARMF Members are expected to contribute in the form of technical input to ARMF, reports and events, training, activities, editorial or translation services among others. Members are invited to regularly communicate their contributions and engagements to the ARMF Secretariat which in turn will publicise these contributions through the appropriate channels, including the ARMF website, Newsletter and others.

e. Duration of Membership

Membership to the ARMF is for a period of four years subject to renewal, based on evidence of engagement and commitment in implementing the mission of the ARMF.

f. Cessation of Membership

Cessation of membership takes place in any of the following ways:

- I. A member may withdraw membership from ARMF at any time by giving a written notice to the Secretariat of the ARMF;
- II. Upon death (for individual affiliate members);
- III. Upon the member failing to pay membership subscription fees or committed in-kind contribution as appropriate, for two consecutive years;
- IV. If the Governing Council decides by resolution to terminate the membership of a member.
- V. Upon withdrawal or termination of membership, the member's name shall be removed from the Register of Members without any refund of any subscription or donations made.

2. GOVERNANCE

The governance organs of ARMF are: The General Assembly, The Governing Council, and The Secretariat.

a. The ARMF General Assembly

The General Assembly, consisting of all members and is the apex decision-making body of ARMF.

The General Assembly convened after every 4 (four) years provides ARMF members with the opportunity to exchange views on Sustainable Mountain Development in Africa.

The General Assembly has powers to make rules and regulations prescribing for matters that are required or permitted by this Constitution to be prescribed or are necessary or convenient to be prescribed for giving full effect to the provisions of this Constitution, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, its own procedure.

The General Assembly shall be held every four years if funding allows. However, it can hold extraordinary meetings any time to discuss specific themes or at the occasion of some events as the Governing Council deems fit.

The quorum for the General Assembly shall be at least 50% of the registered members.

The General Assembly participants elect the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and the elected hold office for a period of 4years (i.e. until the following General Assembly meeting), renewable once. The Chair and Vice Chair are respectively Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Council.

The elected Chairperson shall preside over the next ARMF. In the event that the Chairperson is not available, the Vice Chairperson will chair the meeting.

b. The ARMF Governing Council

The Governing Council is responsible for the strategic guidance of the ARMF, prioritization of projects and initiatives, approval of activities and policies as well as enabling support, understanding and awareness of the ARMF operations.

The Governing Council is composed of eighteen (18) members that must be gender sensitive made up as follows:

- I. 10 members from the 5 regions in Africa (These can come from Governments and national CSOs, including Academia),
- II. 2 members from the Private Sector,
- III. 2 members from Intergovernmental institutions or International NGOs;
- IV. 1 person from the ARMF Secretariat (ARMF Coordinator)
- V. 1 person from Mountain communities
- VI. 2 Global Mountain Steering Committee Representative for Africa

The Mountain Partnership Secretariat, UN-Environment and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation are co-opted as Honorary Members.

The members of the Governing Council shall elect the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Council.

The elected Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Council shall automatically be the Chair and Vice-Chair of the General Assembly respectively.

The Governing Council holds its meetings once every year. However, it can hold extra-ordinary meetings when necessary, including electronically.

The quorum for the Governing Council meeting shall be an absolute majority of the Council members

The Governing Council may invite and grant observer status to specific meetings and activities any organisation, institution or individual from within and outside Africa, recognised for the promotion and support of the goal of ARMF.

The Governing Council shall hold office for a period of four years and may be re-elected, only once, for another period of four years. The Governing Council may extend this period when necessary.

The Governing Council is accountable to the ARMF members.

The offices of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the General Assembly and/or Governing Council becomes vacant if: 1) The office bearer ceases to be a member of the ARMF; 2)The office bearer voluntarily resigns; 3)The office bearer becomes grossly incompetent and the Governing Assembly and/or Council votes him/her out; 4) The office bearer becomes incapable of performing by reason of mental disorder; 5)The office bearer dies. In this case, the Governing Assembly and/or Council elects interim Officer(s) until next General Assembly meeting.

Governing Council membership, rules and regulations are defined by the Governing Council and adopted by the General Assembly of the ARMF.

c. The ARMF Secretariat

The ARMF is coordinated by a Secretariat established to support the implementation of the ARMF activities. For the time being the Secretariat services will be provided by ARCOS building on its leadership in networking and engaging different mountain stakeholders in Africa. The hosting arrangement of the ARMF is reviewed every four years by the Governing Council.

The principal functions of the Secretariat are to:

- I. Prepare for and service ARMF meetings;
- II. Represent the ARMF to governments, technical and financial partners and others;
- III. Coordinate communications and information dissemination on all matters associated with ARMF;
- IV. Catalyse and mobilise resources to support implementation of the ARMF activities
- V. Provide technical assistance by serving as a clearinghouse of technical information;
- VI. Facilitate partnerships for implementation of Sustainable Mountain Development initiatives and ARMF workplan.
- VII. Conduct advocacy, capacity development and brokering functions by acting as a networking and liaison point for AMRF members.
- VIII. Engage and provide support to ARMF members and mobilise new members
Undertake day to day implementation of the ARMF's programme of activities approved by the Governing Council.

The Secretariat is headed by the ARMF Coordinator who is appointed or re-confirmed by the Governing Council every four years. The staff composition and work plan of the AMRF secretariat is developed every year by the Secretariat and approved by the Governing Council.

d. Commissions

Technical commissions may be formed as deemed necessary by the Governing Council and approved by the General Assembly.

ARTICLE 6

ARMF Coordinator

1. Qualifications of the ARMF Coordinator

The qualifications required for appointment as ARMF Coordinator are determined and prescribed by the Governing Council.

2. Conduct of the Regional Coordinator

The Regional Coordinator cannot, while in office, engage in any activities that in the opinion of the Governing Council are incompatible with his/her office in ARMF.

3. Tenure of Office for the Regional Coordinator

The ARMF Coordinator can hold office for a term of four (4) years and is eligible for reappointment once after the initial appointment.

The ARMF Coordinator shall be a full-time paid employee of the ARMF Secretariat.

The Governing Council can shorten or extend this appointment period when necessary.

4. Independence

The ARMF Coordinator and staff, in the discharge of their functions, owe their duty exclusively to ARMF and can neither seek, nor receive instructions in regard to the discharge thereof from any authority external to ARMF. Each Member is expected to respect the international character of this duty and refrain from any action to influence the ARMF Coordinator, the officers or the staff, in the discharge of their functions.

ARTICLE 7

AMENDMENT

This constitution may be amended any time subject to the vote of the absolute majority of the General Assembly.

Proposals for amendment shall be sent to the Governing Council who will disseminate the same to members at least 3 months to the General Assembly meeting.

Adopted at Kigali this 13th day of September 2018