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REPORT OF THE MBE MOUNTAINS FORUM (25th and 26th May 2005)



Wula Ekumpuo
Boki Local Government
Cross River State, Nigeria

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Sustainable Practices in Agriculture for Critical Environments (SPACE)

REPORT OF THE MBE MOUNTAINS FORUM
25TH AND 26TH MAY 2005

The Nigeria Sustainable Practices in Agriculture for Critical Environments (SPACE) Project is implemented by the ARD BIOFOR Consortium under the Biodiversity and Sustainable Forestry (BIOFOR) Indefinite Quantity Contract, Contract No. LAG-I-00-99-00013-00, Task Order No. 814.



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Acronyms

| | |
|-------|--|
| AMWS | Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary |
| CRNP | Cross River National Park |
| CRSFC | Cross River State Forestry Commission |
| DIN | Development in Nigeria |
| FFI | Fauna and Flora International |
| GIS | Geographic Information System |
| LGC | Local Government Council |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NCF | Nigerian Conservation Foundation |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| NGOCE | NGO Coalition for the Environment |
| NTFP | Non-timber forest product |
| PA | Protected Area |
| SPACE | Sustainable Practices in Agriculture for Critical Environments |
| TRCC | Threatened Resources Conservation Centre |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| WCS | Wildlife Conservation Society |
| WWF | World Wide Fund for Nature |

1.0 SUMMARY

On the 25th and 26th May 2005, twenty-seven community delegates from nine communities surrounding the Mbe Mountains joined to discuss the future conservation status and protection of the Mbe Mountains. These delegates represented:

- Abo Mkpang
- Abo Ogbagante
- Abo Obisu
- Bamba
- Bokalum
- Kanyang I
- Kanyang II
- Wula Ekumpuo
- Wula Mgbaesuo

The venue of the forum was the Wula Ekumpuo Community Hall, in Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria. The Forum was sponsored and organized by the USAID-funded Sustainable Practices for Critical Environments (SPACE) Project, as part of their support to community livelihoods and critical environment conservation in Cross River State.

Community delegates were joined by a group of stakeholders with a vested interest in the future conservation and protection of the Mbe Mountains. Representatives from the Cross River State Forestry Commission, Cross River National Park, Boki Local Government, Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Nigerian Conservation Foundation, and the UK-based Fauna and Flora International (FFI) were present.

The Forum was also attended by a number of observers. These included representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations: the NGO Coalition for Environment, Threatened Resources Conservation Centre, Development in Nigeria (DIN), the Ekuri Initiative, and the Living Earth Foundation.

The objectives of the forum were:

- To reach consensus among all community delegates on the preferred long-term management option for the Mbe Mountains that is aimed at the conservation and protection of its plants and animals;
- To identify a management structure that best supports the community livelihoods and conservation goals of the area;
- To develop a public commitment by all stakeholders to the conservation and sustainable natural resources management of the Mbe Mountains.

At the end of the two-day forum, the nine Mbe Mountain communities resolved:

To formally establish the Mbe Mountains as a community managed protected area;

To form an Association from among the nine communities for the purpose of providing leadership, community representation, and management of the Mbe Mountains;

To work in collaboration with relevant Non-Governmental Organizations on the conservation of the natural resources of the Mbe Mountains; and

To seek the support and cooperation of relevant Government Institutions for policy and technical support.

The community delegates specifically requested the continued support and assistance of the Sustainable Practices in Agriculture for Critical Environments (SPACE) Project to facilitate the process of forming the “Mbe Mountains Association” and to support capacity building of this group.

At the close of the forum on 26th May 2005, State, National, and International Stakeholders including the Cross River State Ministry of Environment, the Cross River State Forestry Commission (CRSFC), the Cross River National Park (CRNP), and USAID pledged their support towards implementing the resolution of the nine Mbe communities.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Overview

The Mbe Mountains have remained an area of local, national and international concern to both government and conservation organizations alike since the 1980s. This critical area is located between the Afi Mountains and the Okwangwo sector of the Cross River National Park, in Boki Local Government area, in the northern part of Cross River State.

Conservation and natural resource management organizations are interested in the Mbe Mountains because they contain habitats that are still rich in the diversity of plant and animals. Such habitats are fast disappearing in West Africa, and the Mbe Mountains are among the last mountain rainforests. The mountains harbor many important primates, including the chimpanzee, the drill and most significantly, a population of the Cross River Gorilla. The gorilla is found only in Cross River State and in some parts of western Cameroon. The Cross River Gorilla is one of the most endangered species of animals in the world today. Since the 1980s, when populations of the lowland Gorilla was identified on the Mbe Mountains and the adjoining forests of Afi and Okwangwo, Mbe Mountain's prominence as a center for primate research and wildlife conservation has grown.

Since the discovery of the importance of the Mbe Mountains to primate populations in Cross River State, the area has remained without an "official" conservation/management status. The Mountains are regularly referred to as a "community forest". An attempt was made in the 1990s to include the area as part of the Cross River National Park, but discussions on this effort broke down due to lack of consensus between the Cross River National Park and the Mbe communities on the strategy for managing the area and issues of compensation and benefits. These efforts however, resulted in the formation of the Mbe Mountain Landlord Association in 1994. Membership in the Association was drawn from the nine communities with customary rights to the Mbe Mountains. The communities include: Abo Mkpang, Abo Obisu, Abo Ogbagante, Bamba, Bokalum, Kanyang 1 and 11, and Wula 1 and 11.

Conservation organizations such as the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) have been involved in research and monitoring in the Mbe Mountains. They have also supported conservation education efforts. WCS is still involved in research and monitoring of biodiversity, particularly gorillas, on the Mbe Mountains, and NCF conducts regular conservation education programming in the Boki Local Government area. In addition, the Cross River National Park had, in the 1990s, identified the Mbe Mountains as an area of ecotourism importance/potential for the Okwangwo sector of the CRNP. Efforts of organizations like Pandrillus and WWF, with funding support from the EU, started to focus on conservation, benefit sharing, and tourism development. Most of these efforts died however, when funding was withdrawn in response to the onset of a military regime in Nigeria.

To date, there is no official conservation or protected area status for the Mbe Mountains, despite its importance of biodiversity conservation. The Mbe Mountains do not have a recognized conservation management system, and they do not have a legally recognized management body.

2.2 The Role of the SPACE Project

The Sustainable Practices in Agriculture for Critical Environment (SPACE) Project is a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the appointed organization for channeling the international technical support and finances of the people of the United States of America to countries around the world. Associates in Rural Development (ARD) is implementing this Project under contract to USAID.

The basic goals of the SPACE Project were discussed with Cross River authorities and the Nigerian Government between 2003 and 2004. In 2004, USAID and the Cross River State Government agreed to launch the Project, starting with the development of a project design.

During the design of the SPACE project in 2004, the Mbe Mountains were identified as a critical environment in Cross River State. Other critical environments include the Afi Mountains and the Okwangwo and Oban Divisions of the CRNP. Since the primary emphasis of the SPACE Project is to develop livelihood models that support income growth, strong community development, and habitat conservation, the Project design identified communities associated with these critical environments. The idea was for each community to serve as a learning model to spread successful experience to additional communities.

As a result, two communities around the Mbe Mountains were selected. Five other communities (Bashu, Nsofang, Etara-Eyeyeng, Ebakken, and Okuni) each border other critical environments. With an approved design, the SPACE Project was officially started in September of 2004. It operates until March of 2007.

During an early part of the SPACE Project implementation, profiles of these two communities – Bamba and Kanyang - highlighted the special conservation importance of the Mbe Mountains and pointed to the pioneering efforts of the nine communities around the Mountains to represent the area in some form of collective body – the Mbe Landlords Association.

Based on this profile, and recognizing the importance of the Mbe Mountains to Cross River State biodiversity conservation, the SPACE project embarked on consultations and meetings aimed at developing a strategy for the legal, long term management of the Mbe Mountains.

In February 2005, two Mbe Mountains' community stakeholder meetings were held. The first meeting included representatives from the SPACE focal communities of Kanyang and Bamba, as well as WCS, NCF, CRNP, CRSFC, and a Boki Local Government representative. Using the results of this meeting, and in response to the suggestion of the two community representatives, the SPACE Project was instructed to host a meeting that would discuss the future of the Mbe Mountains and that would include representatives of each of the nine communities around the Mbe Mountains. This meeting was held in Ikom the same month. The decision to hold a larger forum to discuss the management options and strategy for long term management of the Mbe Mountains was taken by the representatives of the nine Mbe communities in February 2005.

In support of this community-based effort, the SPACE Project opened consultation with relevant stakeholders at State, National and International levels. These stakeholders supported the collection of information on the management options available for the Mbe Mountains,

and on the history of conservation and livelihood efforts in the area. Government and non-governmental conservation organizations expressed their interests and their concern for the future of the Mbe Mountains and its communities. They also expressed the need for support and fuller understanding of the initiative on the Mbe Mountains.

Based on an analysis of this information, and on this feedback, the SPACE Project is ready to extend its support of income generation through market-oriented sustainable agriculture and of community land use planning to the six additional communities of the Mbe Mountains. This assistance will be in addition to the support provided for the Mbe Mountains initiative indicated in the resolution of the Mbe Mountains Forum.

3.0 FORUM PROCEEDINGS

The Forum opened on the 25th May 2005 with prayer and a short welcome.

The Forum approach gave full participation and discussion opportunities first to the delegates of the nine Mbe Mountains' communities. Other stakeholders and institutions operated in the role of observers.

Initial remarks and opening comments focused on the importance of team work, cooperation, and the need for regular discussion and consultation.

3.1 Establishing the Context – Why are the Mbe Mountains important?

The reactions of the participants are listed below:

- Mbe is a critical area and it is rich in biodiversity
- Mbe is an important area for research
- Home to rare and endangered species of wildlife
- Has tourism potential
- Provides watershed protection
- Boki Natural Heritage
- Environmental treasure
- Source of livelihood improvement
- Mbe is the “oil of the Boki people”.

3.2 Participant Expectations of the Forum

- To foster cooperation between Mbe communities and other organizations
- Develop strong understanding on the way forward for the Mbe Mountains
- Mbe Mountain communities to see reasons for proper management of the area
- Recognize who are the real players and the stakeholders of the Mbe Mountains
- Identify management strategies for the future of Mbe Mountains
- Identify the role of the communities in the management of the Mbe Mountain
- Identify opportunities for conservation awareness and enlightenment
- To know what is expected from the donors, their interest and commitments

3.3 Community Concerns

“There is need for some caution here; we need to warn that we have been involved in various activities of this nature in the past. The WWF came here to promise us many things. At the end of the day we saw nothing. Please let us know clearly the mission of your project on the Mbe Mountains.” – Chief James Achu – Head of the Legislature, Boki Local Government

There were mixed reactions from the community delegates to the overall purpose of the SPACE Project support. Some community delegates believed that the level of consultation at the community level has been inadequate to enable the delegates to discuss Mbe Mountain management options at the Forum. Below are the highlights of the delegate’s reactions to the presentation of the SPACE vision and objectives of the forum. Individual delegates contributed the following remarks:

- The communities are interested in the conservation of the Mbe Mountains.
- Who gave this title – the Mbe Mountains Initiative?
- Past experience on determining the future of the Mbe Mountains gives us reason for caution. The communities’ experience with WWF and CRNP on Mbe Mountains makes them think twice; they are not ready to loose the area to outsiders.
- Any approach taken on the future of the Mbe Mountains should be community driven; conservation of Mbe Mountain is in the hands of the communities.
- Why did the SPACE Project favor only two of the Mbe communities, e.g. Kanyang and Bamba initially?
- What does SPACE stand to gain for supporting the Mbe Mountains?
- Why advocate links with Takamanda Forest Reserve in the republic of Cameroon and the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary? What sense does this make, and why is it important?

Using the Forum to continue this dialog, the delegates sought additional clarification from the SPACE Project. SPACE Project staff pointed out that the nine community chiefs represented in the Forum had been participants in the February meeting in Ikom. In addition, SPACE Project staff had visited each of the nine communities prior to the Forum to discuss the instructions issued by the Mbe Mountains community meeting in February, and to answer questions among each of the communities. Some Forum delegates pointed out that some of the village delegates had not participated in any prior meetings, nor had they been informed of the role and objectives of SPACE.

Some observations that were recorded included:

“We appreciate the efforts of the SPACE project and the interests of the project to assist the communities on the future of the Mbe Mountains. Many of the delegates here are however concerned about going further without consultation with their respective communities. I beg the facilitators and the SPACE project to please allow community members to return to their various communities and table the issues raised as part of the forum exercise before we can continue.” **Prince Amos Kajan – Community Delegate (Abo Obisu)**

“The delegates here can not take any specific decision on the issue of management option for the Mbe Mountains without due consultations with the community people. It is only going to take a short time and it is possible to do this during today’s evening. The best thing is for us to break now, go back to our communities, consult with the community people, and return here tomorrow to continue the discussions.” –**Chief Honorable James Achu – Head of Boki Local Government legislature and former Chairman of the Mbe Landlords Association**

“...That is how the WWF came and took the lot of my land to become the National Park. If the mission is to take away the Mbe Mountain from the control of my community, it is not going to be possible this time around.” – **Chief Ebang, Clan Head of Abo and leader of the Abo Mkpang delegates**

The Delegates then reviewed sets of questions prepared by the SPACE Project based on earlier discussions that the Project staff had with community leaders during their discussion in Ikom. These sets of questions are attached as **Appendix 1**.

Thus, after taking counsel, the Delegates agreed that:

- The Forum and meetings of this nature have been held in the past and their communities had in most cases rejected any decision taken without due consultation at the community level on specific issues/subject of discussion;
- The communities are serious about the matter and are pleased that SPACE is committed to the same cause;
- The delegates resolved that they could not take decisions without feedback from community people on the future management of the Mbe Mountains;
- The delegates are happy that the forum is a 2-day affair and are resolved to take the issues at stake home for discussion with the community before reporting back to the forum the following day.

The Forum concluded Day 1 to allow delegates to return home to take the counsel of their respective communities.

3.4 Presentation from the Community Meetings

The Forum re-opened on the 26th, with prayer. The twenty seven community delegates representing the nine communities convened a meeting to discuss the results of their deliberations in the communities. The delegates then prepared the following resolution:

Presentation of the common position (One-Voice Resolution) of the nine Mbe Mountain communities on the future management and action on the conservation and management of the Mbe Mountains

Barrister Abang Owan, a community delegate from Abo Mkpang, read the *common voice* resolution as follows;

1. That the nine Mbe “landlord” communities have accepted that Mbe Mountains should remain a Community Managed Protected Area (a conservancy).
2. SPACE should be given all encouragement to assist the community in facilitating the process of achieving the management and conservation of natural resources on the Mbe Mountains.

As a result, the nine Mbe communities wish to make the following statements in support of the above resolution.

Status of the Mbe Mountains

The Mbe Mountains are to be developed into a Community Protected Area (conservancy) for the following reasons:

- We the indigenes will be more committed to the cause since the management will be for our benefit and that of our children’s children;
- It will be easier to hold our own people responsible should anything go wrong;
- We the indigenes know every fact concerning the terrain and other issues concerning the Mbe Mountains;
- A community PA will bring the best long-term benefits “because the indigenes are properly seized of every fact of investment in the protected area.”
- A community PA will meet the needs and aspirations of the communities.

We, the Mbe Mountains communities, are prepared to work together with the various arms of government. We are open to all NGOs and groups who are interested in working with us or providing assistance to us on this issue.

Management of the Mbe Mountains

- We will form and register a very powerful association with membership from all the nine communities and we wish to do this with the assistance of the SPACE project.
- The Association thus formed will have the absolute right to work with SPACE to determine the management of the day-to-day activities of the Mbe Mountain project.
- The Association shall represent the communities on all matters concerning the Mbe Mountains.
- The Association shall relate with partners and hold regular meetings with all stakeholders.

- Benefit sharing amongst the nine Mbe communities shall be on an equal basis. No community shall be superior to the other.
- The management body will operate as an NGO, having legal status and capability of being sued and suing, and not affiliated with any government agency.
- Equal representation from the nine Mbe communities shall form the association so that decisions are acceptable to all the communities.

3.5 Reactions from Observers/Stakeholders

Observers commended the efforts of the community delegates for developing the “one-voice” resolution. The decision taken by the delegates and their communities was considered positive by stakeholders and observers. Observers highlighted the need for assistance from relevant government institutions and non-governmental organizations to achieve the objectives of the Mbe Mountains Resolution. Several stakeholder/observer observations were recorded:

“...a commendable thing to have resolved to put power and management capacity and strength in the people who dwell where the resources are. SPACE, as midwife to this process, has helped open the window. They bring skills to the task and are here to help facilitate the effort. It is good for the people of the Mbe Mountains, and good for people globally.” - **Odigha Odigha, Executive Director, NGOCE and an Observer at the Mbe Mountain Forum**

“Thanks to the community delegates and the Chiefs for the wisdom they have displayed in the community resolution on the Mbe Mountains. Regarding no affiliation to government, good; but we have different cadres and we have to affiliate with existing laws. We can’t talk without referring to those laws and regulations. For you to move forward, you need the Forestry Commission.” – **Fidelis Anukwa, Head, Northern regional office of the Forestry Commission, Ikom**

“Does the community management option exclude any activity? Does it allow some level of use? How will you protect the place? Will you not need training for your people? You need the Cross River National Park...If your mother is bad, you don’t kick her out”. – **Caroline Olory, Staff, Cross River National Park**

“We must remember that if you seek resources from outside, you will have to respect laws. Sustainable development may be a failed paradigm... The difficult history with community conservation does not mean the ideas were all wrong. It is difficult to say that just communities are the solution. Conservation is for the long term and for our children’s children. Conservation costs money. It doesn’t make money. Few conservation areas make money. Long term funding and support will need to come from outside.” – **Prof. John Oates, Wildlife Conservation Society, a stakeholder of the Mbe Mountains initiative**

4.0 ACTION PLAN: Way Forward for the Mbe Mountains Initiative

In a plenary session, community delegates and stakeholders deliberated on the next steps as a follow up to the resolutions of the Mbe Mountain Forum. The Forum agreed on the following steps:

1. A report of the forum should be produced by SPACE and circulated to the nine communities within the next two weeks. Five copies of the report should be delivered to each of the nine communities and submission should be through the community leaders.
2. The Mbe Mountains report should be sent to all participants at the forum including stakeholders and observers.
3. Formation of the Mbe Mountain Association should follow the presentation of reports and compilation of comments from the communities.
4. A constitution drafting committee should be set up to include membership from the nine communities and led by a legal expert for technical guidance.
5. Community delegates should continue to educate and mobilize the respective communities on issues related to the Mbe Mountains.
6. With time, the nine communities may have to make a written and signed declaration available on the status of the Mbe Mountains as a follow up action to the Mbe Forum resolution.
7. Plans for the long-term funding should be developed with an active involvement of the SPACE project.
8. Development of an Mbe Mountains Management Plan should be inclusive of other stakeholders, e.g., the Federal Government and State Government, the Boki Local Government, and international organizations such as the WCS and FFI.
9. The Management Plan process should be embarked upon after the formation and registration of the Mbe Association.

The closing ceremony commenced around 2:00 PM and was attended by heads of major government institutions. The ceremony was opened by an address given by the Head of Wula community, Chief Oliver Osang. In his speech, he saluted the entire gathering and thanked stakeholders and visitors for giving the communities the opportunity to play an active role in planning the future of the Mbe Mountains. He prayed that God should lead everyone safely on their journey to their final destinations.

Other speakers at the closing ceremony were:

Mr Allen Turner, the Chief of Party for the SPACE Project, who reiterated the SPACE vision and commitment to the process of working with and assisting the Mbe Mountain communities in their management effort of the Mbe Mountains

Barrister Abang Owan, a Community delegate from Abo Mkpang, who read the resolution of the two-day forum on behalf of the community delegates, other stakeholders and participants.

Assistant Director Mr. Arikpo, on behalf of the Director of Cross River National Park, who presented the position of the Cross River National Park on the Mbe Mountain initiative.

The Commissioner for Environment represented by Mr. Stephen Bete, of the Ministry of Environment, who delivered the keynote address on behalf of the Commissioner for Environment, Cross River State.

Mr Nduka Okaro, representative of USAID, who attended the two-day forum and spoke on behalf of the hopes of USAID for the successful future of the Mbe Mountain initiative.

Professor John Oates, representing the US-based Wildlife Conservation Society, who spoke in support of the community resolution and also encouraged the Association to seek counsel and guidance from conservation managers and biodiversity experts.

Dr Daniel Pouakouyou, representing the UK-based Fauna and Flora International, who stated that FFI has a keen interest in the future of the Mbe Mountains, in part because of its efforts to support conservation in the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary.

Dr. Chris Agbor, Permanent Secretary, Cross River Forestry Commission, who read the closing speech and announced the commitment of the Forestry Commission to the Mbe Mountain initiative.

Closing statements of the Mbe Mountains Stakeholders and Observers are included in Appendix 2.

A full list of participants is included in Appendix 3.

Appendix 1 – Work Sheets used to Guide Discussion among the Nine Mbe Mountains Communities

Questions to Guide Delegate Discussions:

To ensure that the Mbe Mountains are conserved and protected for the future, what should be the official status of Mbe and Why?

- Added to the National Park or
- Made into a Forest Sanctuary like Afi Mountain or
- Developed into a Community Protected Area (Conservancy).
- Leave things the way they are

Please consider the following:

1. Which management option is most acceptable to the Mbe Communities?
Why?
2. Which option provides the best opportunity to ensure law enforcement and the protection of plants and animals?
Why?
3. Which management option provides the best chance of providing long-term benefits to each of the 9 Mbe communities?
Why?
4. How will your group decision about an official status for Mbe Mountains be affected by community, local government, or state policy?
5. Who would be important partners in the management option your group has selected?

To ensure that the management and supervision of the Mbe Mountains represents the concerns and agreement of the 9 communities, how would you:

1. Organize the day-to-day operations, management and protection of the area?
2. Represent yourselves as one voice to outsiders?
3. Relate to key partners?
4. Decide on the distribution of benefits?
5. What form would this management body take? How would it be organized?

Appendix 2 - Closing Remarks

Closing Remarks of Chief of Party, SPACE Project, Mr. Allen Turner

I greet you, Chiefs—from the communities of the Mbe Mountains, and from the many institutions that care, too, about Mbe. I greet you, all.

Chiefs of the Mbe Mountain communities, today you have proposed that the Mbe Mountains should be protected. You have encouraged SPACE to assist you in doing so because, you have said, “We believe the indigenes will be more committed if the management is our own.”

You have called for a creating a “powerful association”.

You have called for a “fraternal relationship” with Government.

You have called out for partners—all of the NGOs and especially SPACE.

SPACE is ready to go forward with you. But, I ask you to remember that SPACE is here to accompany you only a short time. To make the most of this opportunity, we must understand each other well and work together well.

I wish to ask a few questions to help us think together as leaders and as partners under SPACE about the nature of the challenge that you have proposed. The Mbe Mountains are a gift of creation that our ancestors have passed to us. How can we best pass this gift of creation on to our children and our children’s children?

This is the question of sustainability. Sustainable is “to improve the quality of our lives within the capacity of nature to support that life.” None of our people whose children are hungry will be thinking about sustainability. How do we feed our children well and also pass that gift of creation to our grandchildren?

Part of the challenge, therefore, is helping improve people’s livelihoods as part of the systems that protect the gift of Mbe.

Part of the challenge of leadership and of SPACE is to provide a framework for many voices to come together as one. SPACE has helped today to bring together these many voices, of citizens, of public servants, and of people from far, far away who wish to join in protecting Mbe.

Some feel that we must reach “consensus” from compromise. But are there not some things on which we absolutely agree—a shared vision? Have we not all today agreed that Mbe should be protected? If we all share that vision, if we can all voice that vision, we have a far, far greater chance to move forward together step-by-step to protect that gift for our children.

Part of the challenge, then, is how do we create a shared vision, a shared “mental model” of HOW we can move Mbe and the communities around Mbe to sustainability?

In creating that vision, let us stop criticizing ourselves. As citizens, as public servants, as people from far, far away, let us respect each other and recognize that nobody has answers

yet to these questions. Let US not make the house so small that THEY can't come in. Let us open up to the dialog that allows us to learn together.

These are questions that face us as leaders today. We must all lead in this effort. There is no clan head or governor or father or person from far, far away who will give us the answers and make the decisions and tell us the vision. You, together here today, are the clan head, the governor, the father. There is no charismatic father who will save you. You are the leaders.

A good leader must do three things well:

First, "hear all the voices." A leader must create a space for hearing what others say, including those who have difficulty in speaking out. Leadership is not "knowing." It's listening.

Second, from these differing voices, a leader must help his people create new categories and new criteria. There is a city in a far, far land that uses just one question as the criterion to guide its development work: "How do you love all the children?"

Third, from these new criteria, create new possibilities that show what it means to be a human being and a community within an economy conducive to life—livelihoods that will protect and not use up the precious gifts of nature.

SPACE is ready to go forward with you. But, again, please remember that SPACE is here to accompany you only a short time.

The commitments you have voiced today are not commitments to SPACE. They are commitments to each other and to the other stakeholders gathered here today. Working together with these others here today, you can achieve what you have set out to achieve. And SPACE, for the short time we are here, will help you work together with these others.

Working towards sustainability requires a language of family and clan, a language of relationships. This is the SPACE agenda. SPACE will work with you to create that language and dialog.

You have called for a creating a "powerful association" of nine communities working together. SPACE will work with you to strengthen your association.

You have called for a "fraternal relationship" with Government. SPACE will work together with you and government to strengthen that relationship.

You have called out for partners—"all of the NGOs and especially SPACE." SPACE will work with you and will help you build relationships with NGOs.

Thank you for the vision you have shared with us today.

Representative of the Boki Local Government Chairman

Represented by the Leader of the House of Legislature, Chief James Achu

I am a witness to the declaration made by the 9 communities on the management of Mbe Mountains.

On behalf of the Honorable Chairman of the Boki Local Government, I wish to register my support to the efforts of the Mbe Mountain initiative and the efforts to form the Mbe Mountain Association.

The position of Government in the entire process of moving the Mbe Mountains initiative forward cannot be over-emphasized, and the Boki Local Government shall give her backing to the deliberations and further activities on this process.

Keynote Address by the Commissioner for Environment, Cross River State, Mr. Patrick Odok

I feel honored to be invited to deliver the keynote address at the closing ceremony of the Mbe Mountain Forum.

The importance of mountain ecosystem in the stability of their region has long been recognized. According to Klaus Toepler, UNEP Executive Director, ‘Mountains have a source of wonder and inspiration for human societies and cultures since time immemorial’. The difficult terrain of most mountains have helped to protect them from human exploitation, but increasing population has led to encroachment on mountains as the need arises for agricultural expansion and demand for wood for infrastructure development, as well as the high demand for bush meat.

When we reflect upon the fact that mountains are the sources of most rivers in the world and hence our greatest reservoirs, the last bastions of wildlife habitats and biodiversity and veritable areas for recreation and scenic beauty, then the need to preserve them becomes compelling. It is in appreciation of this need that UNEP sponsored the International Year of Mountains in 2002. The slogan “we are all mountain people” was an apt for the organizers of the International year of mountains as it is apt for the Mbe Mountain Forum today.

It is clear from the SPACE project plan that the forum on the Mbe Mountains is targeted at the improvement and diversification of the livelihood of the host communities, conservation of ecological processes and biodiversity, and limitation of un-checked agricultural expansion and deforestation among other benefits.

The Mbe Mountain initiative is in consonance with the Cross River State Government policy thrust as evidenced by the gazetting the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary in 2002 and the on-going work there.

It is clear that the management options for the Mbe Mountains project are in favor of a structure that will be co-managed by the communities. With this position, you the members of the benefiting communities will have to prove that you are worthy of the investments,

which the Donor agencies will be putting in place to improve your lot. The first thing to do is to sink your differences by not antagonizing yourselves and your benefactors. It must be a give and take affair. Given the enabling environment, more assistance will come from Donor agencies and the Government.

Let me commend the foresight and hard work of those pioneers whose work drew national and international attention to the rich biodiversity of Mbe Mountains and the Donor Agencies and other collaborating organizations who have continued to keep faith on the Mbe Mountains project. The same goes for the mountain people of the nine communities of the Mbe Mountains.

Let me congratulate all of you for a successful forum. In conclusion, I wish to assure you all that you can count on the co-operation of the Ministry of Environment in all that will be required of us for an early and successful take-off of the Mbe Mountain Protected Area.

On behalf of the Director, Cross River National Park

I am happy about the outcome of the two-day forum on the Mbe Mountains. It will be recalled that the Cross River National Park has a very long historical relations with the Mbe Mountains. In the past, the CRNP attempted working with the communities in order to achieve the annexation of the Mbe Mountains to the Cross River National Park. This did not work out eventually and since then, all parties has been looking forward to a long term management option that will guarantee the protection of biodiversity on the mountain. I am pleased by the development of today and wish to thank the SPACE project for this initiative.

The Cross River National Park is very ready to assist the Mbe Mountain Association in whatever way most particularly in the area of protection of the endangered species on the Mbe Mountain. This is paramount because the destruction of the mountain and its biodiversity may have serious impact on the neighboring Okwangwo sector of the Cross River National Park.

Mr. Nduka Okaro, USAID Representative

We believe in what we are doing because of its contribution to the life of the people and the children of today as well as that of the next generations

The USAID supports the ARD effort to be involved in this process and we believe in ARD doing it successfully. I have enjoyed every bit of the two-day Forum and I can see clearly the great unity within the communities as they presented a common voice

The fear that this effort will end with the SPACE Project should not be considered negatively at all , because SPACE Project facilitation is going to involve a lot of stakeholders who will work together and continue the process. What we are doing here is in form of a pilot project which can be extended based on the outcome of what we are doing now.

The sustainability of the project is important; and the USAID will make sure that the project is supported to ensure its sustainability.

Professor John Oates, Wildlife Conservation Society

The WCS has a long history working on research and conservation on the Mbe Mountains. We are mostly involved in Gorilla population research and monitoring. We have long term commitment to wildlife study and conservation on the Mbe Mountains and other areas in Cross River State.

We hope to assist in your continued effort to guide wildlife conservation.

We will be ready to assist the new Mbe Mountain initiative in the development of the Management Plan for the Mbe Mountains.

Happy to meet you all.

Dr. Daniel Pouakouyou , Fauna and Flora International (FFI), Cambridge, UK

I am pleased to be involved in the process of moving the Mbe Mountains forward. FFI is involved in Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary (AMWS) in partnership with the CRSFC, NCF, WCS and Pandrillus.

FFI provide protection for endangered species and take recognition of the need of involvement of local people in the sustainable management of natural resources.

FFI will be interested in the objective and vision of the Mbe Mountain initiative and its future. FFI hope to be involved in the process of moving the process forward from here.

Permanent Secretary, Cross River State Forestry Commission, Dr. Chris O. Agbor

I feel highly honored to be part of this important forum, probably the first of its kind in Nigeria; deciding on the management option for an internationally recognized critical environment – the Mbe Mountains.

No doubt, the Mbe Mountains has attracted international attention due to its unique nature, its high biodiversity and the emerging conservation concerns of the area. These features have made it a biodiversity hotspot.

The Forestry Commission is conscious and determined to protect biodiversity sensitive areas such as the Mbe Mountains. It is in this regard that the Forestry Commission facilitated the gazettelement of the Afi Mountains Wildlife Sanctuary, an equally high biodiversity area, which has now been accorded a higher protection status.

We recognize that government cannot do this alone. We advocate full community participation in the conservation of critical areas, since this will afford multiple benefits to the people. The people must be encouraged to share in both responsibilities and benefits. In the same way we fully support the Mbe Mountain initiative. The Forestry Commission will do all within her powers to facilitate the legislation and support to this initiative, which may be the first of its kind in Nigeria.

The Forestry Commission will, in the future, focus itself to be more proactive in playing a supervisory role to ensure that all stakeholders perform their respective duties. This process will no doubt require greater assistance and cooperation from conservation organizations globally.

I will therefore appeal to our international conservation friends to be more sincere, devoting more of their efforts on practical issues and less on theory in assisting especially the Mbe Mountains' communities to enable them take on the Driver's seat in this process. Livelihood options for the local people remain paramount.

The local people believe in a community driven approach, it is cost effective and more sustainable and easily emulated by other local communities. Finally, it is my wish and hope that the Mbe Mountain communities will see this initiative as purely theirs and work hard to sustainably enjoy this God given treasure, while preserving same for the unborn child.

Long live the Mbe Mountains initiative;
Long live Cross River State;
Long live Nigeria;
Long live all global conservation concerns.

Appendix 3.0 – Participants List: Mbe Mountains Forum
(25th & 26th May 2005)

| | Name | Status | Community/ Institution Address | Contact Point |
|----|-------------------------|---------------------|---|----------------------|
| 1 | ABANG, Cletus | Community Delegate | Bamba | |
| 2 | ABANG, James (Chief) | Community Delegate | Bamba | |
| 3 | ABUA, Sylvanus | DIN (SPACE partner) | DIN, 90 Atekong Drive, Calabar | 8035519226 |
| 4 | ACHU, O. Theresa (Mrs.) | Community Delegate | Bamba | |
| 5 | ACHU, James (Hon) | Stakeholder | Boki Local Government | |
| 6 | ADUMA, Odey Francis | Stakeholder | CRSFC | |
| 7 | AKANSON, Anthony A. | Community Delegate | Bokalum | |
| 8 | AKWO, Mathew (Chief) | Community Delegate | Wula Ekumpuo | |
| 9 | ANUKWA, Fidelis | Stakeholder/Partner | CRSFC | |
| 10 | ARIA, Kingsley | Community Delegate | Kanyang 11 | |
| 11 | ATAH, Tony | DIN (SPACE partner) | DIN, Ikom Office | |
| 12 | BESSONG, Patience | Community Delegate | Abo Mkpang | |
| 13 | DUNN, Andrew | Stakeholder-NGO | WCS, 109a Marian Road, Calabar | |
| 14 | EBAN, Otu Bernard | Community Delegate | Abo Mkpang | |
| 15 | EGBAI, Ojah | Stakeholder | Cross River State Forestry Commission | |
| 16 | EMMANUEL E., (Chief) | Community Delegate | Kanyang 11 | |
| 17 | ESEBE, Caleb | Community Delegate | Wula Mgbaesuo | |
| 18 | EVA, Hans | Observer | Bokalum | |
| 19 | EWA, Elizabeth | Community Delegate | Abo Ogbagante | |
| 20 | INAHORO, Ibrahim | Observer -NGO | NCF, 109a Marian Road, Calabar | |
| 21 | KAJANG, Amos (Prince) | Community Delegate | Abo Obisu | |
| 22 | MBIA, Emerson (Prince) | Community Delegate | Abo Obisu | |
| 23 | NCHU, Benedict Akom | Community Delegate | Kanyang 1 | 8039993676 |

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|----|---------------------------|--------------------|--|------------|
| 24 | NWUFOR, Earnest | Observer -NGO | TRCC, 93 Ndidem Iso Street, Calabar | 8037089353 |
| 25 | OATES, John | Stakeholder | WCS, USA | |
| 26 | OBI, Rose | Community Delegate | Wula Ekumpuo | |
| 27 | OBUN, A. Celestine | Community Delegate | Bokalum | |
| 28 | OBUN,. O John | Community Delegate | Abo Ogbagante | |
| 29 | OCHA, Gabriel (Chief) | Community Delegate | Kanyang 1 | |
| 30 | ODEY, Anthony O | Observer | Community Secondary School, Okundi | |
| 31 | ODIGHA, Odigha | Observer- NGO | NGOCE, Ndidem Iso Street, Calabar | 8037237454 |
| 32 | OFRE, Ojong | Community Delegate | Wula Ekumpuo | |
| 33 | OGAR, Edwin (Chief) | Observer -CBO | Ekuri Initiative | 8035461507 |
| 34 | OGAR, Gabriel | Observer- NGO | Living Earth Foundation, State Housing, Calabar | 8029412440 |
| 35 | OKARO, Nduka | Observer | USAID, Abuja | |
| 36 | OLORY, Caroline | Stakeholder | CRNP, Akamkpa | |
| 37 | OQUA, Etim | Press | CRBC, Calabar | |
| 38 | OSAGWU, Caroline | Community Delegate | Kanyang 11 | |
| 39 | OSANG, .N. Oliver (Chief) | Village Head | Wula | |
| 40 | OSANG, Francis | Community Delegate | Abo Obisu | |
| 41 | OTU, Augusta (Miss) | Community Delegate | Kanyang 1 | |
| 42 | OTU, Helen. O. (Mrs) | Community Delegate | Wula Mgbaesu | |
| 43 | OTU, Mark Enyia | Stakeholder-NGO | NCF-WCS Education Program, 109a Marian Road, Calabar | |
| 44 | OTU, P. Vicky | Community Delegate | Abo Ogbagante | |
| 45 | OUT, Barnabas Ajah | Community Delegate | Wula Mgbaeshuo | |
| 46 | OUT, Victoria Alua | Community Delegate | Bokalum | |
| 47 | OWAN, Abang (Barrister) | Community Delegate | Abo Mkpang | 8023500335 |

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|----|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 48 | PARR, Zoe | DIN (SPACE partner) | DIN, Obudu | |
| 49 | POUAKOUYOU, Daniel(Dr) | Observer - Int NGO | FFI, Cambridge, UK | |
| 50 | UBI, Sam | Observer- NGO | NCF/Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary | 8035835364 |
| 51 | UKET, Uket Bassey | Observer -NGO | NGOCE, Calabar | |
| 52 | UMINA, Clement | Press | Governor's Office, Calabar | |
| 53 | USHIE, Sylvester A | DIN (SPACE partner) | DIN, Bateriko Office | |
| 54 | ADELEKE, Alade | ARD/SPACE | SPACE, Calabar | aadeleke@ard-space.org |
| 55 | HETZ, Peter | ARD/SPACE | ARD, Vermont | |
| 56 | TURNER, Allen | ARD/SPACE | SPACE, Calabar | aturner@ard-space.org |
| 57 | YAKASAI, Bello | ARD/SPACE | SPACE, Calabar | bayakasai@ard-space.org |
| 58 | OFRE, Lawrentia | ARD/SPACE | SPACE, Calabar | lofre@ard-space.org |
| 59 | ARCHIBONG, Bassey | ARD/SPACE | SPACE, Calabar | barchibong@ard-space.org |
| 60 | ANNAH, Sonia | ARD/SPACE | SPACE, Ikom | sannah@ard-space.org |