

4. Goal and objectives of the regional strategy

During the various meetings organized as part of the dialogue on water and climate change in West Africa, a much discussed issue related to what could constitute the niche and added value of the regional strategy in relation to ongoing and envisaged actions. A major concern of the stakeholders of the dialogue was to make sure that the regional strategy complements and backstops current efforts instead of competing against them.

4.1 Justification

This regional strategy is justified by the following observations made by the participants of the various meetings organized as part of the regional dialogue on water and climate change.

- The poor level of awareness of the threat posed by climate variability and change in the region and the lack of significant action to address this issue.
- There is no consultative framework on climate change in the region, which results in poor co-ordination among countries and institutions involved in climate change issues.
- Many of the fresh water resources in the region are transboundary watercourses which are not appropriately accounted for as far as national strategies are concerned.
- The current exchange of adaptation experiences are poor, even when good practices are concerned.
- The current focus on national approaches to adaptation limits opportunities for achieving economies of scale.
- Availability of expertise, considered on a per country basis, is sometimes insufficient to face scientific challenges posed by climate change; hence the need to pool regional expertise.
- At a regional level, appropriate policies (including the required legal and institutional frameworks) to face climate variability and change have not been put in place. There are few significant initiatives aimed at solving this problem and the existing ones are not coordinated.
- In the field of climate variability and change, science and policy are often disconnected at the regional level. On the one hand, there are research institutions dealing with the production of scientific knowledge and on the other hand, the policy makers who make laws and decisions at national and regional levels and engage in negotiations on climate change issues at international level. There is a great need to put science at the service of decision making and ensure that the concerns raised by decision makers are taken into account by scientists.

These various issues show that a regional strategy is the missing link in the efforts aimed at strengthening the region's preparedness level to face the impacts of climate variability and change, particularly as regards the inland and coastal water resources.

4.2 Objectives

Overall objective

The overall objective of the strategy is to strengthen the capacity of the region to adapt to the impacts of climate variability and change on water resources and aquatic ecosystems of West Africa.

Strategic Objectives (SO)

SO1. To improve and share basic scientific knowledge and decision-support information;

SO2. To promote the IWRM principles and the ecosystem approach in the management of water resources, and continental and coastal wetlands;

SO3. To identify, promote and disseminate appropriate adaptation technologies, techniques and measures;

SO4. To set up a regional consultative framework.