ABSTRACT

Ecosystems provide essential goods and services which are important for human survival and alleviation of poverty. Prudent management of ecosystems will ensure that these benefits are harvested effectively and efficiently. However, the creation of a sovereign modern state system that arose from the Westphalia treaty of 1648 and exported to Africa through colonization has had many negative impacts on management of trans-boundary ecosystems that straddle across international boundaries. This is because independent states have different laws and institutions concerned with management of ecosystems. Furthermore, the levels in economic growth of the societies living across such boundaries vary and hence, these challenges call for more robust management strategies that will ensure better management of trans-boundary ecosystems. This study sets out to examine the challenges of managing cross-boundary ecosystems using Mt. Elgon which transcends Kenya-Uganda international 'border' as a case study. In answering this critical question, the study examines conflicts inherent in poorly managed ecosystems and legal and institutional challenges associated with them. The study utilizes case study design which enables the study to focus on management of ecosystem in depth over a period of time. It relied on a conceptual framework that borrows from current trends that include Ulrich's 'risk society theory' and 'securitization' by Copenhagen school as analytical tools. The study has used qualitative data which has been collected from primary and secondary sources for analysis as a tool to test the hypotheses. The study finds out that prudent management of the ecosystem helps in minimizing conflicts and contends that frontiers which are historically underdeveloped by governments add to the challenge of managing trans-boundary ecosystems. It posits that the current discord in legal and institutional framework is an impediment to ecosystem conservation and is not adequate to guide the effective and efficient management of the Mt. Elgon ecosystem. The study asserts that the two countries need to harmonize their laws so that they can be in tandem with both international laws on conservation and those of each other. The concerned countries need to co-operate and collaborate their activities in order to achieve better management.