

CONGO BASIN FOREST PARTNERSHIP

CBFP COUNCIL

Second meeting

Libreville, Gabon, 16 May 2017

M I N U T E S

Chair: The EU Facilitator of CBFP, Mr Anders Henriksson,
assisted by the Deputy Facilitator of CBFP, Mr Maxime Nzita

Notes were taken by the EU CBFP Facilitation team.

Representing CBFP Colleges:

For the CBFP Regional College

Gabon: H.E. Ms Estelle Ondo, Minister of Forest Economy, Fisheries and Environment, in charge of protection and sustainable management of ecosystems

COMIFAC: H.E. Honourable Vincent Biruta, Minister of Natural Resources of Rwanda, represented by Mr Raymond Ndomba Ngoye, Executive Secretary of COMIFAC

ECCAS: H.E. Ambassador Ahmad Allam-Mi, Secretary General, represented by Mr Rémy Mukongo Shabantu, Expert on Forest Economy and Sustainable Forest Management

For the CBFP Civil Society College

ACRN: Mr Maixent Fortunin Agnimbat Emeka, Regional Coordinator, African Community Rights Network

CEFDHAC: Ms Dancille Mukakamari, General Secretary REFADD

For the CBFP International NGO College

AWF: Mr Hugues Akpona, Director AWF DRC

WWF: Ms Marthe Mapangou, Director WWF Gabon

For the CBFP Private Sector College

ATIBT: Ms Jacqueline Vandepol, Central Africa Representative, FLEGT Project Coordinator

For the CBFP Donor College

USA: Ms Katherine Brucker, Deputy Chief of the US Mission to Gabon
EU: H.E. Ambassador Helmut Kultz, Head of the EU Delegation to Gabon

For the CBFP Scientific and Academic College

CIRAD: Mr Eric Forni, Researcher

For the CBFP Multilaterals College

FAO: Ms Sandra Ratiarison, Forestry Officer
GVTC: Dr Muamba Tshibusu Georges, Executive Secretary

1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

The Meeting was opened by the Chair, Mr Anders Henriksson, EU Facilitator of the CBFP. He welcomed the Council members to the meeting and introduced H. E. Mrs Estelle Ondo, Minister of Forest Economy, Fishing and Environment of Gabon, inviting her to address the Council. Speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister of Gabon, the minister pointed out that most Council members were able to attend this 2nd Meeting of the Council and welcomed this significant turnout as a sign of enthusiasm and commitment to work together on the joint objectives and common endeavours of the partnership.

She stressed the commitment of the Gabonese authorities to support the efforts of the EU Facilitation to improve the efficiency of the partnership, citing more specifically the follow-up of the Kigali recommendations, the scrutiny and fine-tuning of the CBFP priorities proposed for 2018-2022, as well as the preparation of the forthcoming 17th Meeting of Parties.

She also emphasized the importance of CBFP and of the permanent commitment of all its members in helping the states of the sub-region to cope with the numerous challenges they face in their efforts to sustainably manage their forest lands and resources, including through the support of dedicated bodies, such as ECCAS, COMIFAC and RAPAC.

The Chair thanked the minister for her presence and welcomed the support expressed by the Gabonese authorities as an important positive signal in favour of CBFP credibility, which success ultimately rests on proper and efficient ownership by all Member States and actors in the sub-region.

He welcomed the new COMIFAC Executive Secretary to his first participation to a CBFP meeting in this capacity and again congratulated him and the new leadership team on their appointment. The Chair also thanked ECCAS for their participation in the meeting, highlighting that efficient and effective collaboration between these two key regional bodies is of crucial importance to the prospects for ensuring progress and positive results of CBFP collaboration in the future.

The agenda was adopted without any changes.

2. Report on the activities and perspectives of the EU Facilitation of CBFP and on the follow-up of the 16th Meeting of Parties in Kigali, Rwanda.

Chair

The CBFP Council has been established jointly by all CBFP members in the framework of the strengthened governance structure adopted at the 16th Meeting of Parties (MoP) in Kigali. The rationale for the establishment of the CBFP Council and Colleges is spelled out in the Kigali Final Communiqué and in the newly adopted revised CBFP Cooperation framework (membership approaching 100 members, need for increased continuity of CBFP action and more effective follow-up between the annual MoPs, complex multi-sectoral nature of the threats to the integrity of the Congo Basin forests requires broader and more effective regional dialogue and strengthened involvement of the private sector).

The Council is a key operational body to follow up on and prepare the annual MoPs and to facilitate dialogue on policy issues jointly recognized as of key importance by all CBFP members.

The EU facilitation wants to foster business-like working modalities and practices for the Council, aiming for a results-oriented approach. The Council should not primarily be seen as a product of the EU Facilitation, but as a joint effort by all CBFP partners to organize their interaction more efficiently in order to better be able to promote the shared objectives.

The Chair underlined that the success of the Council and College reform is a collective responsibility, shared by all CBFP partners, and must not be regarded as the sole concern of the CBFP facilitation. He also stressed that the added value of the Council ultimately depends on prior adequate and efficient collaboration of all CBFP members at the level of their respective Colleges.

The Chair praised the College representatives present for their availability and attendance at this second Meeting of the Council, which he considered to be a very positive sign of commitment and support for the CBFP governance reform, a matter that Minister Ondo had also highlighted in her remarks.

Regarding developments since the 16th MoP in Kigali, the Chair highlighted two points:

1. In parallel to the nomination of the new Troika at the head of the COMIFAC Executive Secretariat, the COMIFAC Member States have initiated efforts to solve the financial crisis faced by the institution, with the payment of a part of the arrears on the membership dues. This is a very welcome, albeit limited, first step, which should hopefully lead to a structural arrangement enabling regular contributions and financial stability for the Secretariat in the future;
2. The dialogue between ECCAS and COMIFAC regarding their respective roles and their working relationship has improved significantly over the last six months. This is very welcome for the sub-region, but also for the international partners of both institutions, which expect that this ongoing dialogue will enable a formal clarification of the respective mandates of ECCAS and COMIFAC in regard to the conservation, management and economic valorisation of forest resources. The Chair asked ECCAS and COMIFAC to keep CBFP members updated on further developments in this regard and invited the representatives of the two organisations to update this Council meeting on these matters.

Regional College

The COMIFAC Executive Secretary (ES) announced that the CBFP Regional College had decided that its representation on the CBFP Council will henceforward be ensured by the President-in-Office of COMIFAC and the Secretary-General of ECCAS. Being unable to attend this Council meeting due to another obligation, the President of COMIFAC, Hon. Dr Vincent Biruta, Minister for Natural Resources of Rwanda, had requested the COMIFAC ES, to represent him at this second meeting of the CBFP Council.

After a brief reminder of CBFP expansion since its establishment in 2002 in response to an UNGA Resolution, the COMIFAC ES underlined that each of the successive facilitations had been keen to provide additional momentum to the partnership, and that the establishment of the CBFP Colleges and Council constitutes an important opportunity, which offers new and very welcome perspectives for the strengthening of CBFP.

The COMIFAC ES reminded the Council that COMIFAC has been set up by its founding Member States as a dedicated body to channel the financial support provided by CBFP partners to the joint efforts to ensure the conservation and sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests. He regretted, however, that the expanding scope of issues and size of programs related to these forests has not been accompanied with a corresponding reinforcement of the human, technical and financial capacities of COMIFAC. Quite on the contrary, many ongoing and announced regional programs focusing on the Congo Basin forests appear to be resting on other institutional arrangements.

Consequently, COMIFAC would like CBFP partners, including the EU Facilitation of CBFP, to increase their support to building the capacity of COMIFAC to fulfil the role it has been assigned. Such a strengthening of the capacity of the organisation to deliver is of key importance for strengthening the ownership of the COMIFAC member states for their own regional organisation. In this regard, the COMIFAC ES mentioned the following concrete ideas:

1. Establishing a basket fund for the institutional and organizational development of COMIFAC, financed through the charging of a compulsory administration fee levied on each regional program targeting the Congo Basin forests;
2. Joint funding arrangements by COMIFAC Member States, key CBFP donors and UN agencies to support the functioning and reinforcement of COMIFAC;
3. Funding COMIFAC for the implementation of the 2nd version of the Convergence Plan, once this version has been officially approved by the Heads of States of the sub-region.

Regarding the dialogue between ECCAS and COMIFAC, two meetings at secretariat level have been held since the 16th MoP in Kigali. These meetings have yielded an aide-mémoire and a joint roadmap. COMIFAC has been confirmed as a specialized, technical body of ECCAS, in charge of the implementation of decisions pertaining to forest conservation, management and environment at the regional level. General political orientations are decided at the ECCAS level but COMIFAC is responsible for their implementation. This being said, discussions between the two organisations are still ongoing and are expected to produce a formalised partnership in the coming months. In this context, the COMIFAC ES mentioned that discussions were underway regarding the formulation of a "performance contract" intended to steer the working relations.

Mr Remy Mukongo, expert in charge of forests economics and rural development of the ECCAS general secretariat, representing the Secretary-General of ECCAS who could not attend the meeting, stressed that the mandate of ECCAS covers the reinforcement of all sectors which can contribute to the economic development of the ECCAS Members States. Since 2007, this mandate is organized

around three complementary pillars: peace and security, infrastructure (transports, energy, and water) and the management of natural resources. COMIFAC is a specialised agency for the management of forest issues in the framework of the third pillar. ECCAS confirmed that relations with COMIFAC are now excellent as these have been clarified in discussions with the new COMIFAC troika.

ECCAS expressed its full support to the establishment of the CBFP Colleges and Council and underlined that setting priorities would provide a clear added value for the ongoing cooperation efforts targeting the sustainable valorisation of forest resources in the sub-region. ECCAS is confident that the EU will keep supporting these efforts even after the end of the EU Facilitation of CBFP.

The COMIFAC ES raised the matter of the next CBFP Facilitation and underlined that COMIFAC would be in favour of an extension of the current EU Facilitation to the period 2018-2019, arguing in favour of a second facilitation period which could be organized with a joint and growing role for COMIFAC. The Chair responded that such a scenario is not realistic and should therefore not be contemplated as an option by CBFP partners. The Chair urged all partners to focus on and invest in the full implementation of the CBFP governance reform, which in the view of the EU Facilitation offers the best guarantee for the increased strength and efficiency of the partnership and which will in turn pave the way for easier periodic renewals of the CBFP facilitation. The Chair indicated that the EU would be ready to work with partners in order to promote a smooth transition to the next facilitation in a manner which preserves and builds on the progress made during the EU Facilitation period. He indicated that this matter would be further discussed at the 17th MoP later this year.

Private Sector College

Ms Jacqueline Lardit-Van De Pol of ATIBT expressed enthusiasm regarding the strengthened governance architecture of CBFP and the increased role which the private sector is expected to have in CBFP cooperation in the future. The private sector is keen to participate in cooperative endeavours such as CBFP, which offer opportunities to echo and build upon their own efforts, achievements, and proposals for an improved and more sustainable management of the natural resources of the Congo Basin forests.

There is however a need to increase the involvement of SMEs in the sustainable management of the forests of the Congo Basin. This requires an increased cooperation with ECCAS, in order to rationalize the working environment of small scale operators and to streamline their collaboration to the sustainable management of the natural resources they exploit. In order to increase the involvement of smaller companies and to widen the range of local economic interests associated to the international efforts for the sustainable management of the forests of the Congo Basin, ATIBT has decided to organize its next international ATIBT forum in Libreville in 2018.

Donor College

Ms Katherine Brucker, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy in Gabon, underlined the importance of the Congo Basin forests as one of the tropical lungs of the planet. The USA is eager to continue to play a major role in the development of the CBFP and fully supports the EU Facilitation's efforts to foster a more efficient and focused collaboration. It is convinced that the challenges faced by the Congo Basin forests can only be addressed by a strong and properly managed partnership, gathering the various kinds of actors involved in the exploitation and conservation of the natural resources harboured by these forests.

The EU representative, Ambassador Helmut Kulitz, welcomed the presence of the representatives of all the CBFP colleges established at Kigali last November. This level of attendance reflects positively on the rapidly growing ownership of the reforms adopted at Kigali. The EU is keenly favouring the proposed working methods focusing on jointly approved priorities organized according to adequately set timeframes. This is the right reform to give a new breath to the partnership by promoting increased CBFP efficiency and visibility in the increasingly competitive international arena. This may in turn benefit to the Central African sub-region as a whole. The Ambassador also congratulated COMIFAC and ECCAS on their reinvigorated dialogue, which the EU considers to be a key condition for the sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests.

3. CBFP Priorities

3.1 *Medium Term Priorities (consideration of draft list)*

Chair

In his introduction to this agenda item, the Chair stressed that, although the issues of security and armed networks are unfortunately attracting more and more international attention in the external perception of the sub-region, green issues (i.e. environment and natural resources management) still form one of the keys lenses – and possibly still the main one – for the consideration of the sub-region by the international community. Consequently, the way in which the countries of the sub-region and various local actors address these issues at the regional level affects their credibility at the international level. Establishing a proper collaboration framework and producing valuable results within this framework can therefore exert a major influence on the way in which the Congo Basin is perceived at the international level. This is why the success of the governance reform of the CBFP, including the decision to concentrate and organize collaborative work on a jointly approved set of key priorities, should be considered important by all CBFP partners.

In order to follow up the decision of the 16th MoP in Kigali last November, the EU facilitation team has synthesised a draft list of 19 priorities, which is based on the discussions held at Kigali. An initial version of the list was circulated to the College representatives in February. The present proposal reflects feedback received from some of the colleges.

The purpose of this discussion in the Council is to ascertain the degree of convergence of views on the list and to hear Council members' views on the issue of medium-term priorities for CBFP.

The Chair reminded the Council that the objective is not to limit and circumvent the activities to be carried out by CBFP partners in the framework of the partnership, but to codify these, in order to streamline and improve the visibility of the joint activities of the partners in the framework of CBFP in an effort to improve the branding of the partnership. Actually, all the priorities listed are already pursued through numerous activities carried out by CBFP partners in their current work programmes. The purpose of this exercise is to provide the partnership and its members with a dynamic tool for categorizing ongoing and future action, as well as to improve related communication.

Regional College

All the priorities mentioned in the list are related in one way or another to the activities listed in the 2nd version of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan, the implementation plan of which has yet to be formulated and adopted. A five-year implementation plan of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan is

currently being drafted for the period 2020-2025 with the financial support of UNFF. A close articulation with the CBFP priorities will be most welcome.

The current list does not contain any clearly spelled out reference to the NTFPs, although these constitute an important socio-economic sector for the valorisation of the Congo Basin forests. This should be corrected by adding a reference to NTFP in at least one of the priorities.

Priority n°2:

Although this concern is certainly legitimate, it might prove difficult to find an adequate methodology to convene all these actors within the loose structure of CBFP.

Priority n°10:

Wildlife management and anti-poaching measures, which are considered as key priorities by COMIFAC, have also recently been identified as strategic priorities at the African Union level. It might be useful to refer to this commitment in the wording of priority n°10.

Priority n°13:

The wording of the priority should be completed with the additional sentence “without causing adverse effects to good forest governance”

Regarding Priority n°2, the Chair, while agreeing that the drafting was ambitious, noted that the Kigali Communiqué contained clear language on the need to involve economic decision makers, investors etc in the regional dialogue regarding the sustainable management and protection of the Congo Basin forests and that this objective therefore had to be adequately reflected in the list of priorities.

The Council should serve as a forum to discuss this question and seek to find ways to convene such key actors as and when appropriate. This may occur outside of the regular CBFP structures (such as the MoPs and the CBFP Council Meetings). It could also happen case-by-case based on the need to address particular key issues.

Civil Society College

The College understands the rationale behind the limitation of the number of medium-term priorities and strongly supports the EU Facilitation in its efforts to keep the list as concise as possible. This being said, the College is keen to increase the visibility and transparency of the efforts conducted to progress along the jointly adopted priorities. It also underlines that objectives related to governance should be expressed more clearly and that the monitoring of the governance efforts should be organized more formally within CBFP.

The College would like to put forward a specific proposal that a regional governance monitoring unit (“observatoire”) be established. The objective of this measure would be to measure the added-value of all investments made in the forest sector in the sub-region, both from a socio-economic point of view and from a transparency/governance point of view. Members of the college would be ready to play a role within the framework of such an initiative.

The Chair welcomed the specific proposal. He underlined, however, that this would require significant further elaboration before it could be considered at the Council level and encouraged the College to continue their work on this matter. In regard to this specific proposal, the COMIFAC ES added that proper coordination should be ensured beforehand with the ongoing work in OFAC, where a specific monitoring tool is already being developed to follow up the implementation of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan.

International NGO College

The College strongly supports the option to keep the list of medium-term priorities to a minimum, in order to ensure added-value and thorough analysis of the issues jointly identified as priorities.

The College is satisfied that all its operational priorities are well reflected in the list proposed by the EU facilitation in preparation of the Council meeting.

Priority n°9:

The last words “in favour of good governance” should be suppressed here. The issue of priority n°9 should be restricted to law and regulations enforcement from a juridical point of view. Governance is a transversal issue which goes beyond the objective of priority n°9.

Private sector College

Priority n°6:

Over the past years, the private sector has collaborated efficiently with the Governance Working Group of COMIFAC on a series of issues related to the sustainable management of production forests yielding results in the diverse frameworks such as UNFF, FLEGT VPAs and PPECF. There is a shared interest inside the College to continue this collaboration in the coming years, including within the CBFP framework.

The College is keen to ensure that all COMIFAC working groups play a pivotal role in the coordination of CBFP thematic activities.

Priority n°11:

In order to also cover the whole spectrum of inter-spatial and inter-thematic situations, the wording of the priority may be expanded from “trans-boundary approaches” to “landscapes and trans-boundary approaches”.

Finally, it may be useful to include in the introductory text to the CBFP medium-term priorities a reference to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Chair noted this proposal, while indicating that such references should only be made where they were relevant and added value. Of course, CBFP itself is a multi-stakeholder partnership and, as such, a key part of implementing SDG17.

Donor College

The College strongly supports the current effort to agree on a limited set of time-bound priorities for collaboration within the CBFP platform as an important means to increase the efficiency, effectiveness and results-orientation of the partnership. Priorities n° 9 and n° 11 were highlighted as major priorities for both the US and the EU. The EU announced that it has just launched, alongside ECOFAC VI, a new regional anti-poaching and anti-trafficking initiative to be managed by UNODC and integrated in a capacity-building program for peace and security in the sub-region (PARRCIC). Anti-poaching is also a key priority of the US, which focuses on the reinforcement of national anti-poaching capacities. Combatting illegal timber trafficking is also an important priority for both the EU and the US in the sub-region.

Research and Academic College

The members of the college are grateful to the EU Facilitation for the proper integration of their comments and recommendations in the current version of the list of priorities. The College reiterated its availability to develop methodologies (notably a set of indicators), in order to monitor the actual implementation of jointly agreed thematic priorities within CBFP and its readiness to present such methodologies during the 17th MoP. The Chair took note of this offer.

Multilaterals College

The College is happy to see that the ideas put forward by the EU Facilitation a year ago in Kinshasa are beginning to take grip, paving the way for a more practical and results-oriented collaboration among CBFP partners. The members of the college consider that the adoption of jointly agreed priorities should be complemented with associated indicators of implementation in order to promote the overall efficiency of the partnership. They also consider that the development of improved information-sharing tools should benefit all actors with an interest in the Congo Basin, including those which are not CBFP members.

Priority n°11:

The Grand Virunga Transboundary Collaboration treaty (GVTC) should be listed as a priority initiative, alongside Garamba-Chinko, TNS and TRIDOM.

Following these constructive exchanges, the Chair concluded that the Council had agreed to the proposed list. College representatives that would like to propose further purely linguistic adaptations are invited to send these to the EU Facilitation team before the end of May. The EU Facilitation will review the comments received and circulate a finalised list to all CBFP members by the end of June. The final list is planned to be adopted at the 17th MoP.

3.2 Annual Priorities (presentation and discussion)

Chair

The Chair indicated that a possible further step in order to reinforce CBFP cooperation could be to use the list of medium-term priorities, once adopted, as a basis to identify one or several annual priorities for joint actions or reflections by interested CBFP partners. Such annual priorities could be decided at one MoP with a view to presentation of results at the subsequent MoP. Advantages of such a system could be to enhance the visibility of the platform itself and to create increased continuity within the platform during the periods in between the annual MoPs. The Chair invited

Council members to comment on whether they would see any merits in such an approach, which would, of course, only work if CBFP members were committed to making a success of it.

Speaking on behalf of the *Donor College*, the US welcomed the idea put forward by the EU Facilitation and underlined that similar thematic processes have yielded interesting results in other international voluntary fora. The key factor is to make sure that there is a shared interest among partners to work together on a selected topic, as this will ensure ownership and adequate momentum for the production of the expected outputs.

The *International NGO College* underlined that a guiding framework for the use of these priorities would be more than welcome.

The *Regional College* considered that the list of medium-term priorities would be a useless document in the absence of a dedicated process for implementation and monitoring.

The *Private Sector College* underlined that the COMIFAC working groups should play a central role in the regional coordination on any identified regional priorities.

On the basis of these reactions and referring to the Kigali Final Communiqué, the Chair informed the Council that the EU Facilitation is ready to develop a concept note on annual CBFP priorities to be considered at the next meeting of the Council. The note should include a proposal for a pilot scheme encompassing one or two priorities for the period between the 2017 MoP and the 2018 MoP. If the approach is agreed and these pilot annual priorities can be adopted at the 2017 MoP, the EU Facilitation is ready to identify for the selected pilot priorities, one or several interested CBFP partners which have the technical and human capacities required to manage exchanges and discussions among the most interested partners (possibly through workshops) and to produce a set of results within the relevant timeframe.

4. 17th Meeting of Parties: Update by the Facilitation on revised format

Chair

In his introduction to this agenda item, the Chair underlined that the task of effectively following up the recommendations of the 16th MOP was rendered impracticable and almost impossible by the sheer number of recommendations. Despite the best efforts of the EU Facilitation, the Kigali meeting arrived at no less than 43 recommendations. The Chair underlined that partners' unanimous call for more effective and efficient monitoring and follow-up of recommendations agreed at CBFP meetings would not be possible to achieve if the current meeting habits were not reformed.

Mr. Dany Pokem of the EU Facilitation team then introduced the document elaborated by the EU Facilitation. In an effort to render future MoPs more efficient and to maintain the momentum of activities throughout the duration of the MOP, a revised structure over a reduced duration of four days was proposed as follows:

Day 1: Meetings of the CBFP Colleges and Council

Days 2-3: 3 thematic streams

- With a proposed list of stream leaders
- With crosscutting participation of the Private Sector, Civil Society and Research
- Producing a limited number of more targeted recommendations

Day 4: Plenary / Political section

The *Civil Society College* inquired about the conditions for being selected as stream leader and emphasized that their members are eager to participate actively in each of the thematic streams.

The *International NGO College* noted that with 3 streams instead of 5 there is a clear risk that the number of recommendations per stream will increase. Proper and strict guidance to stream leaders is therefore critical in order to limit the number and properly focus the recommendations.

The *Private Sector College* proposed to organize the Council session on the second day, in order to enable CBFP partners with limited time available (as is often the case in the private sector) to limit their participation to MoPs to 3 days only.

The *Research and Academics College* underlined the importance of a results-oriented approach in the conduct of the streams, and recalled the availability of its members to develop a "cahier des charges" for the internal organization and expected outputs of each of the 3 thematic streams.

The *Multilaterals College* recommended that, for the sake of clarity and consistency, the number of streams be aligned to the number of thematic sub-groups in the list of medium-term priorities and that the streams be named according the headings of these sub-groups.

The Chair suggested that from 2018 onwards the precise identification of the thematic streams of the following MoP may be discussed and decided at the Council level (starting at the 4th meeting of the Council in the spring of 2018). However, for the 17th MoP the EU Facilitation will confirm the precise contents and proposed leaders for the 3 pre-identified streams through a letter to be sent to all CBFP partners, if possible by the end of June. College representatives which would like to see fellow college members considered as possible stream leaders for the 17th MoP are invited to contact the EU Facilitation team in writing before June 15.

Regarding the 17th MoP, the Chair informed the Council that discussions are currently under way between the EU Facilitation and the Government of Cameroon with a view to organize this important regional event in Douala at the end of September. The EU Facilitation will inform all partners of the final decisions in this regard as soon as an agreement has been reached with the Cameroon authorities.

5. Conclusion and next steps

The Chair thanked the Council members for their valuable and substantial contributions, which promote the successful implementation of the governance reform jointly initiated a year ago and officially launched by all CBFP partners in Kigali in November 2016.

He underlined that continued joint efforts invested in the CBFP governance reform are the best guarantee for a smooth transition to the next CBFP facilitation from 2018 onwards. This reform represents a collective achievement, which will hopefully be profitable to all CBFP partners and to the forthcoming facilitations.

Council members were invited to present to the Chair proposals for agenda items to be considered at the next Council meeting. This meeting will be held in conjunction with the 17th MoP. Such items should pertain to matters of general interest to all CBFP partners.

Finally, the Chair, on behalf of all CBFP partners, thanked the Government of Gabon for its friendly and convivial welcome and the RAPAC team for the efficient organisation and logistical arrangements for this meeting of the CBFP Council.