

Cooperation Framework for Members of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership

CBFP is a non-binding multi-stakeholder partnership enabling member organisations to cooperate on a voluntary basis. The Partnership is open to all states, international institutions and organisations, NGOs, research and academic institutions and private sector entities, which adhere to this Cooperation Framework. Endorsement of this Cooperation Framework, including the CBFP Cooperation objectives, principles and structures, is a prerequisite for CBFP membership. Membership of CBFP does not imply any direct financial commitment.

1. Cooperation objectives of CBFP

With the signing of the Central Africa Forests Commission (COMIFAC) Treaty and the adoption of the sub-regional COMIFAC Convergence Plan in 2005 in Brazzaville, the Heads of State and Government of the Congo Basin countries confirmed their commitment to the principles of conservation of the biodiversity and the sustainable management of Central African forest ecosystems, the fundamental rights of their populations to benefit from forest resources and the imperative to reconcile development needs with conservation within the framework of international cooperation.

Cooperation within CBFP aims to support this shared vision of the Central African Heads of State, notably by improving measures taken, including technical and financial support measures, to promote the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable management of forest ecosystems, to combat climate change and to alleviate poverty in Central African countries in line with the COMIFAC Convergence Plan.

2. Cooperation principles of CBFP

In their activities, CBFP members are committed to respect the following set of principles:

- seeking close coordination with other members of the Partnership. They are committed to the development of synergies between partner actions in line with the objectives of the 1999 Yaoundé Declaration, the COMIFAC Convergence Plan and other relevant regional agreements;
- promoting the well-being of local populations through sustainable development, sound management of forest resources and the conservation of the exceptional biodiversity of the Central African forests, recognized as a shared world heritage asset;
- promoting the vital role that the Central African forests play to maintain regional rainfall patterns and combat climate change as an essential means to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement;

- working in a cross-sectorial manner, involving all relevant actors, including agriculture and land use planning, in order to preserve and sustainably manage the forests and their ecosystems and to alleviate poverty as effectively as possible;
- integrating, to the extent possible, their actions into the national and regional programmes of COMIFAC Member States in order to ensure greater engagement of all states for optimal sustainability of results;
- supporting institutional capacity-building of key actors in the forest/environment sector, an essential prerequisite to lasting improvement and effectiveness of actions of COMIFAC Member States;
- devoting particular attention to the increased involvement of civil society and private sector stakeholders in the sustainable management of Central African forest ecosystems and the conservation of their biodiversity;
- participating in national and regional consultation processes in order to guarantee enhanced transparency in the management of the forest/environment sector in COMIFAC Member States;
- sharing information and research data in order to enable effective coordination of their activities at the local, national and regional levels.

3. Cooperation structures of CBFP

Consistent with its non-binding and voluntary character, CBFP does not have a formalized institutional structure. Instead it has a set of informal structures, which serves to enable effective dialogue, exchanges and collaboration and to promote the convergence of collectively held views on issues of major importance to the protection and sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests among the large number of CBFP members. These structures are described in the **Attachment**, which forms an integral part of this document.

ATTACHMENT

The CBFP Annual Meeting of Parties

The annual CBFP Meeting of Parties serves as the “General Assembly” of the Partnership. This meeting is held annually in one of the COMIFAC Member States and brings together all CBFP stakeholders. The official programme of the meeting consists of a technical segment with thematic workshops, so-called streams, followed by a political segment with meetings of the CBFP colleges and Council followed by a high-level plenary session, which adopts conclusions and recommendations. In parallel to the official programme there is an exhibition space, allowing partners to exhibit their programmes and activities, as well as a number of related side-events.

The CBFP Colleges

CBFP members are grouped in seven colleges based on the type and role of actor. The seven colleges are:

- The CBFP Regional College
- The CBFP Civil Society College
- The CBFP International NGO College
- The CBFP Private Sector College
- The CBFP Donor College
- The CBFP Scientific and Academic College
- The CBFP Multilaterals College

Only CBFP members can belong to a CBFP college. A CBFP member can only belong to one CBFP college. Each college establishes its own working methods and modalities for sharing information and forming collective opinions, including for designating two college members to represent the college in the work of the CBFP Council.

The colleges provide a forum where CBFP members of the same category can raise and discuss issues and concerns of common interest, exchange views on the outcome of meetings of the CBFP Council and of the annual Meetings of Parties, and identify issues they would like to be considered by the Council. The colleges should promote an effective dialogue among their members and enable all members that so wish to engage in the dialogue within CBFP. Colleges should therefore ensure that channels for information-sharing exist and function as efficiently as possible.

In order to ensure a fair and balanced representation of all CBFP members, while safeguarding sufficient continuity in the work of the CBFP Council, the mandate of college representatives should enable them to represent their college at no fewer than two but not more than five meetings of the CBFP Council. When representing their college in the CBFP Council, college representatives should act in line with the orientations that have been agreed beforehand by the college they represent. They should also report on all Council meetings to all members of their college. Throughout their mandate, college representatives need to be able to animate an ongoing dialogue and exchange within their college as well as represent their college in two meetings of the CBFP Council annually.

Consideration inside the colleges constitutes the way through which individual CBFP members can propose issues which they think should be discussed in the CBFP Council.

Colleges meet physically at least once a year, during the annual Meeting of Parties. Colleges should be able to prepare their views on items on the agenda of the CBFP Council without holding a physical meeting.

The CBFP Council

The CBFP Council is composed of two representatives of each CBFP college and chaired by the CBFP Facilitation. It meets twice a year, once during the annual Meeting of Parties and once between such meetings. Council meetings may be held in Central Africa or in Europe.

With its college-based composition, the Council is a platform for effective inter-partner discussion. It allows the viewpoints of different groups of CBFP partners to be brought together and considered. This helps to promote the convergence of collectively held view on issues of major importance to the protection and sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests, including key problems, priorities and efforts to foster concerted action.

The Council regularly follows up on the outcome of the annual Meetings of Parties, including minutes, conclusions and recommendations and assists the Facilitation in preparing such meetings. The Council supports the Facilitation in steering the Partnership, including through discussions of strategic issues regarding the key challenges facing the Congo Basin forests and the orientation and priorities of CBFP cooperation.

The CBFP colleges may propose items to be considered by the Council. Such items should reflect a significant level of shared interest in the respective college. The Facilitation may also propose agenda items and request feedback from the colleges.

The Council operates with a high degree of transparency. All CBFP members are informed of the outcome of all Council meetings.

The CBFP Facilitation

CBFP is led on a voluntary basis by one of its members, which serves as Facilitator.

The Facilitation, which plays a key role in fostering effective dialogue and cooperation within the Partnership, chairs the CBFP Council, represents the Partnership externally, leads the organisation of the annual Meetings of Parties and manages the CBFP communication and information sharing tools. Any CBFP member may provide financial and/or technical support to support the work of the CBFP Facilitation.

Adopted on 25 November 2016 at the 16th CBFP Meeting of Parties in Kigali, Rwanda