

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS regarding the COLLEGES and COUNCIL of CBFP

Why are these new informal structures within CBFP being introduced?

Since its inception, the CBFP has continued to grow and attract different partners, which is a good sign of its success and perceived relevance as the most comprehensive multi-stakeholder platform in the region focused on the protection and sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests. However, to some extent the Partnership has now become a victim of its own success: for example, its annual Meeting of Parties has grown to assemble more than 500 participants, making it increasingly difficult for individual partners to make their views heard and for effective dialogue to take place. In addition, as a result of the expansion of the membership, the task of providing the CBFP Facilitation has become increasingly arduous from year to year.

At the same time, the Congo Basin forests are facing challenges of growing complexity and gravity. The need for a better articulation between sustainable forest management strategies and economic and development objectives in the region requires improved possibilities for discussing issues and following up on shared viewpoints. Effective dialogue and cooperation between the various partners within CBFP is more important than ever.

There is a consensus among the main financial partners of CBFP that the working modalities of the partnership need to be adapted to these new circumstances.

While fully preserving the non-binding character of CBFP cooperation, the creation of these new informal structures should help promote effective dialogue and exchanges of use to CBFP partners in addressing the growing challenges facing the Congo Basin forests. It should help to promote the convergence of collectively held views on issues of importance to the protection and sustainable management of the forests and also help to reduce the burden of the Facilitation.

How do these new structures help to address these challenges?

Grouping CBFP partners by types of actors into seven CBFP colleges, which each send two representatives to a CBFP Council is a way of both making the dialogue at the heart of CBFP more efficient and of helping to ensure that all partners are able, if they so wish, to take part in this dialogue. The structures should allow for a more efficient dialogue among CBFP partners, as it will be conducted between smaller groups of partners at a time (whether in the colleges or in the Council), while providing greater opportunity for the whole diverse range of CBFP partners to give their views. The structures should also improve the possibilities of following up on issues and on shared viewpoints. Thanks to being supported by the Council in the task of facilitating the CBFP, the Facilitation would benefit from a reduced burden of work.

Are these new structures compatible with the voluntary and informal nature of CBFP, which has been formed as a non-binding multi-stakeholder partnership for sustainable development of "Type II"?

Yes, they are. The CBFP colleges and Council are informal structures without any legal status. They provide a way for the large number of CBFP partners to organise their voluntary cooperation in a more effective way with a focus on promoting effective dialogue and exchanges of views and information. They represent a practical adaptation of the working modalities of the Partnership to new circumstances.

What is the role of the CBFP Council?

The CBFP Council will be a platform for promoting effective inter-partner discussion. With its college-based composition, the Council will allow the viewpoints of different groups of partners to be brought together and considered more effectively. This should help to promote the convergence of collectively held views on issues of importance to the protection and sustainable management of the forests, including key problems, priorities and efforts to foster concerted action. It should also allow for more regular follow-up on key issues and discussions.

The Council will meet twice a year (once back-to-back with the annual Meeting of Parties and once in between such meetings), and will also assist the Facilitation in preparing and following up on the annual Meetings of CBFP Parties.

The Council will operate with a high degree of transparency and all CBFP members will be informed of the outcome of all Council meetings.

How is the agenda of the CBFP Council established?

Each college will be able to propose agenda items to be put on the agenda of the Council. In order to be put onto the Council agenda, such items should reflect a significant level of shared interest in the respective college.

The Facilitation will also be able to propose agenda items and also request feedback from the colleges.

When the Council meets outside of the annual Meeting of Parties, it is foreseen that it would normally consider an item on the follow-up of the most recent annual Meeting of Parties and the preparations of the next annual Meeting of Parties.

What is the role of the CBFP colleges?

The colleges are introduced in order to allow each partner to express their views more easily than is possible at the annual Meetings of Parties and to ensure that channels for

information-sharing are established and function as efficiently as possible. The colleges assemble CBFP partners of the same category and as such provide a forum where issues and concerns of common interest can be expressed and discussed.

Consideration inside the colleges constitutes the way through which individual CBFP partners can propose issues which they think should be discussed in the CBFP Council. Similarly, the colleges provide a mechanism for groups of partners to exchange views on the outcome of meetings of the CBFP Council and of the annual Meetings of CBFP Parties.

What is the role and responsibilities of those partners which are selected by their peers to represent, for a limited period, their respective college in the CBFP Council?

CBFP partners chosen by their peers to act as college representatives will be responsible for ensuring a well-functioning exchange of information between members of their respective college.

In the CBFP Council the college representatives should act as “the voice and the ears” of their college peers. When participating in the Council discussions, college representatives need to act in line with the orientations which have been agreed beforehand by the college they represent. They must also faithfully report on all Council meetings to all members of their college.

Given these important responsibilities of college representatives, their selection by their peers in a given college should take into account the not insignificant investment of time and resources that will be required by these partners in order for them to be able to fulfil this role in an adequate manner. The duties will entail attending two CBFP Council meetings per year, which may be held in Central Africa or in Europe, in addition to animating dialogue and exchanges within their college throughout the year. It is therefore important to ensure that the representatives chosen are capable of fully carrying out this role.

How often do the colleges and the Council meet?

The Council meets twice a year, once at the MoP and once in between.

The colleges meet physically at least once a year, at the annual Meeting of CBFP Parties, but further meetings can be envisioned in the margins of various events where many college members participate, such as relevant UN COPs, relevant regional conferences etc. The meeting practices will vary among colleges. Colleges do not necessarily meet before each meeting of the CBFP Council. They should be able to prepare their views on items on the Council agenda without necessarily holding a physical meeting.

It is foreseen that the official programme of the annual CBFP Meetings of Parties include meetings of the CBFP colleges and the CBFP Council.

Are there any dedicated resources available for the activities of the colleges and for the partners representing their respective college in the CBFP Council?

In the immediate perspective, the EU Facilitation will make available premises at the 2016 Meeting of CBFP Parties in Kigali in November for all colleges that wish to do so to meet.

In a longer-term perspective some donors may find it worthwhile to support the interaction inside some CBFP colleges as a way of promoting dialogue and improved collaboration among CBFP partners. This could for instance entail the provision of some resources for additional physical meetings or support for the work of the representatives of some colleges.

Does the numbering of the colleges carry any significance?

No. This has been done initially for purely practical reasons. In fact, the EU Facilitation suggests that the colleges are designated on the basis of their composition as follows:

- 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

How does an organization become a member of a CBFP college ?

All official members of CBFP belong to a CBFP college. First the organization should join the CBFP as an official member, as only CBFP members can be members of a CBFP college. Then the CBFP Facilitation proposes that the new CBFP member joins the relevant CBFP college. The Facilitation informs all members of the relevant college of this. A CBFP member can only belong to one CBFP college.

On what basis are CBFP members grouped in the various colleges?

The basic principle is that the type and role of the actor is decisive. In any borderline case, the issue will be resolved through consultations between the CBFP Facilitation and the CBFP member concerned.