



## **EUROPEAN UNION FACILITATION OF THE CONGO BASIN FOREST PARTNERSHIP**

### **Working meeting with a view to establishing a Council of the CBFP**

**Kinshasa, 11 May 2016**

#### **Minutes**

##### **Participants' general reactions concerning the proposed governance structure**

- Participants were unanimous in recognising that while the CBFP is a Type II partnership, its flexibility and the non-binding nature of commitments made by partners should not preclude it from functioning with clarity and rigour.
- Therefore, participants welcome the European Facilitation's ambition to provide the Partnership with a more permanent mode of operation, based on interaction between a Council and various colleges of actors.
- Participants recognise that putting such a mode of operation in place is necessary in order to allow the Partnership to be more efficient and effective and to have greater influence (in policy dialogue on one hand, and in coordinating activities in the field on the other).
- Participants recognise the merits of a flexible and decentralised approach for the functioning of the colleges. They are aware that while this will be easy to promote in some colleges, which are already used to working as a "network," it will be more complex in others. The latter group will need more attention and support from the Facilitation.
- Participants agreed on the fact that this meeting of the 11th May 2016 was not a constitutive meeting of the Council, but a working meeting aiming to enhance the reflections initiated by the EU Facilitation.

##### **Participants' proposals for improvements to the proposed governance structure**

- One of the main concerns expressed by participants was the question of how the proposed structures (colleges and Council) would concretely improve the way in which the CBFP works on substantive issues, collective reflexions and collective recommendations.
- In the organisational chart of the governance structure presented by the EU Facilitation, there is no link between the substantive work (discussions that take place in the thematic working groups / streams / "Cadres de Concertation Thématiques") and the proposed structures (college and Council). Participants are of

the opinion that the success of the proposed reform will depend on clarifying these links.

- Participants highlighted that it is important to build on what already exists. The added value of the new colleges proposed must be clarified relative to what is already in place. For example, CEFDHAC reminded the meeting that it also works on the basis of working groups and regional structures. This is also the case for COMIFAC, which encompasses several thematic working groups.
- Participants stressed that the operational assets of the CBFP, such as the Market of Ideas and the discussions in various formats that take place during the Meeting of Parties, need to be preserved. They recognise that the evolution of the governance structure proposed by the EU Facilitation could reinforce and enhance these assets, by incorporating them into a more effective framework.
- Participants recognise that in the short term, the key to the success of this reform lies with the colleges to be established. All that follows will depend on the colleges' correct functioning and their ability to select representative and effective delegates for the Council. Failure at college level will make it impossible to succeed at the Council level.

#### **Discussions on the links between the governance structure and thematic priorities**

- Being more homogenous (in the case of the colleges) and more permanent (in the case of the Council), the new structures should make it easier to discern the priorities that it is possible to achieve through the CBFP, which should contribute to the identification of thematic priorities.
- Following on from work carried out internally, each college would be able to request that the Council address certain specific themes.
- Since 2012 the institutes of training and research that are members of the CBFP have attempted to organise themselves. They support the ambition of the EU Facilitation to help each group of actors to organise themselves into colleges within the CBFP. However, they draw attention to the fact that the internal success of a college is directly linked to its members, and a fortiori the college leaders, having a good understanding of the expected output. The expected output of the colleges must be clearly defined, practical and possible to use by the Council as well as by political decision makers in the states of the sub-region. In this regard, the identification of thematic issues and the manner in which suggestions from the colleges are formulated are key aspects, which must be clarified for the reform to be successful.
- During discussions of the different thematic issues in focus at this time or which will be identified as priorities in the future, the colleges and the Council are not intended to discuss questions regarding the financing of activities of individual partners. Naturally, discussions of matters of a principal nature regarding donor financing can take place within the colleges and in the Council. However, such discussions should not concern the financing of the activities of individual partners. Only financial questions of a collective interest and of a systemic nature can legitimately and efficiently be brought to the Council table.

## **Discussions on partners' thematic priorities**

- The EU Facilitation recalled the various instruments that exist to catalyse and provide frameworks for the production and exchange of information (COMIFAC Convergence Plan, PAC (Plateforme des Partenaires d'Appui à la COMIFAC) and the website of OFAC (Observatoire des Forêts de l'Afrique centrale)). The EU Facilitation emphasised that information is costly and quickly becomes obsolete and that a permanent commitment from all partners is therefore required to share information in real time in order to give it the maximum added value.
- Participants shared their priorities for action on this occasion as members of the CBFP and not as representatives of the different colleges. This step will be carried out at college level at the constitutive meeting of the CBFP Council, which will take place during a later phase when the colleges are already working and have adopted common priorities (see next steps below).

## **Next steps**

- The minutes from this meeting will be sent to the participants as well as to the all the 76 members of the CBFP.
- An improved version of the document regarding the governance reform, including the organisational chart, will be developed. It will reflect the discussions during this working meeting and will be sent to participants as well as to all 76 CBFP members.
- The establishment and initial operation of the colleges constitute a priority for action for the coming months. The EU Facilitation will send its suggestions by mail to participants as well as to the rest of the 76 CBFP members.
- The constitutive meeting of the Council could take place either back-to-back with the next Meeting of Parties or later. The date and venue of the next Meeting of Parties will be communicated as soon as possible by the EU Facilitation.
- The EU Facilitation wanted to hold the meetings in Kinshasa before finalising the Facilitation Road Map, as it considers that the Road Map should be a reflection of the common ambition of the partners. The Road Map will be revised following the Kinshasa meetings and the final version will be sent to participants as well as to all 76 CBFP members.