

## **Contribution of the partners of the Donor College of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP)**

The main financial partners of the CBFP, upon invitation from the European Union which is providing the Facilitation for the Partnership for the 2016-2017 period, met on the **27th January 2016** to share their views on the current state of the CBFP, and the issues and opportunities it is currently facing.

Following these discussions, the members of the Donor College wish to share their analyses and proposals with the other CBFP partners, so that the Partnership can move forward with its new dynamic in a consensual way.

The main points resulting from the meeting are the following:

### ***On the current context in which the CBFP operates:***

- 1) During its 13 years of existence, the Partnership has undeniably played a major role in improving the exchange of information between partners and in promoting the image of the Congo Basin Forests and of the COMIFAC. The number of members and of participants at its meetings has only continued to grow since its creation.
- 2) However, much remains to be done in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the technical and financial contributions implemented, and to ensure better alignment with the key objectives of COMIFAC. Improving partner coordination in strategic planning, priority identification, joint programming and project implementation would lead to better results.
- 3) The context in which the CBFP is developing has itself evolved a great deal. The threats that the Congo Basin Forests currently face are not only emanating from the logging sector. Approaches for managing them need therefore to be more and more multi-sectorial and must take into account competition in land use planning, notably from extractive industries and agro-industries.
- 4) An additional recurring problem hinders any work aiming at an integrated regional approach: that of the Central African States' support for their own regional organisations. Financial support, and sometimes political support, has frequently been lacking, and COMIFAC and ECCAS are both subject to recurrent crises and a chronic lack of resources.
- 5) During the two years of the EU Facilitation, in addition to the biannual rotation of the COMIFAC's Presidency, elections are taking place in many countries of the region and the statutory staff of the COMIFAC Executive Secretariat will be replaced. This unusual situation will make the need for effective collaboration and coordination within the Partnership more crucial than ever.

### ***On the CBFP's vision***

- 6) The original approach of the CBFP, with different types of partners working collaboratively to bring about the Central African Heads of States' vision for "collaborative, sustainable management of the Congo Basin Forests," is more relevant and necessary than ever.
- 7) The aid effectiveness approach that has been developed since 2005 through the Paris and Busan declarations, and its basic principles, must necessarily act as operational guidelines for the CBFP. This includes promoting transparency, harmonisation of development efforts and a mutual responsibility for cooperation between all members of the Partnership. It is however

noted that in applying these principles it is important to take into account the specific features of different types of actor: for example the private sector, an actor that should ideally be better represented in the CBFP.

- 8) In September 2015, the 17 “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDGs) were adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations. They now constitute a frame of reference that CBFP partners should take into account. The SDGs (global) and the COMIFAC Convergence Plan (specific to the Congo Basin) are the two main frameworks that should be integrated into CBFP partners’ work.
- 9) Building on the three abovementioned approaches, the Partnership must also aim to promote “results-oriented” programming, and must encourage partners to systematically identify their expected results and communicate progress made on a voluntary basis.

### ***On the functioning of the CBFP***

- 10) At this point the regional organisations should, once equipped with a strengthened capacity for analysis and strategic orientation, take on a greater leadership role in the CBFP. This development will mean that the Partnership is putting into practice the Paris Declaration and its principles relating to alignment and ownership.
- 11) In order to bring about this significant development in the CBFP, all of its partners need to be involved, by means of intensified and efficient consultations. It is to help bring about this phase that a new governance structure of the CBFP has been proposed, which respects the nature of the “Type 2 Partnership” and is based on flexible, informal structures.
- 12) In order to provide for structured dialogue at political and technical levels, colleges (groups of partners of a similar nature and with close interests) can be established. The recommendations produced by each college will be able to be brought to the CBFP Council by their representatives and debated.
- 13) Each college will be able to adopt its own form of internal governance. But for the time being it has been recommended that the Facilitation take a proactive lead in forming the colleges and suggesting potential leaders. The objectives and expected results of each college must however be clearly established.
- 14) At technical level, the partners involved in project delivery working on the same thematic priorities or objectives of the Convergence Plan will organise more regular exchanges through the Thematic Working Groups (“streams”) and will report on their activities and results at the plenary Meetings of Partners of the CBFP.
- 15) The EU’s proposal to carry out a “scoping study” instead of the traditional “joint evaluation” in order to produce concrete options for the evolution of the Partnership was welcomed. The Terms of Reference of this study, which must be shared with the partners when ready, are still at the development stage.

### ***On the establishment and strengthening of operational coordination tools***

- 16) The main financial partners of the CBPF have decided to pursue concrete options, according to the means available, for making sure that technical and financial contributions are coordinated and thus for ensuring their greatest possible plus-value.
- 17) Activities carried out in the Congo Basin, their methodologies, progress and results should be able to be followed by means of database-type tools. Partners are asked to regularly update

these databases, particularly the OFAC projects database and the COMIFAC “convergence” database.

- 18) Compatibility and interaction between the abovementioned databases and national databases (built on national partners’ frameworks for cooperation, for example in DRC for monitoring the REDD / CAFI investment plan) must be guaranteed.
- 19) Joint logistical frameworks must be developed; in the first instance this will involve renewed efforts towards coordination and information sharing at different stages of the programming cycle, as well as putting in place joint programme evaluations.
- 20) Lessons learned and knowledge acquired through project work and research in the Congo Basin must be made available to the countries of the region and to the other CBFP partners. It is also crucial to make this « knowledge bank » accessible and usable for both technical and political actors.

***On the importance of a regional approach in the Congo Basin and mobilising the necessary funds to support this approach***

- 21) To ensure sustainable management of the Congo Basin Forest, taking the regional level into account is essential, particularly on issues such as wildlife trafficking, water resource management, and climate-related questions. Regional cooperation should be centred on organisations that have a mandate to work on the environment and forests. As such, in addition to COMIFAC, which has long been at the centre of the CBFP, ECCAS should play a major role in the Partnership.
- 22) However, this approach must also be based on concrete actions and produce tangible results in order to make its plus-value felt.
- 23) The institutional landscape of the Congo Basin must be clarified if we wish to have strong and efficient regional institutions, whose results and utility are recognised by their Member States and by the rest of the CBFP partners. Well-defined roles for the different institutions involved, without overlaps, as well as clear modalities for interaction and working relationships between them are vital, particularly, in the first instance, between COMIFAC and ECCAS.
- 24) The strength of these regional organisations rests above all on their backing by their own Member States. Other CBFP partners can only envisage support for these organisations if their Member States take ownership of them and support them.
- 25) COMIFAC is currently in serious financial difficulties, due to outstanding payments by Member States of their “egalitarian contributions” (in some cases dating back several years), which should be its main source of funding. The details of its financial situation and the consequences of this must be made known, and some kind of action by CBFP members with diplomatic weight behind them aimed at COMIFAC Member States could be envisaged.
- 26) Concerning new funding opportunities for activities related to sustainable forest management and maintenance of forest cover in the Congo Basin, the CBFP Donors welcome the establishment of CAFI, the Central African Forest Initiative, encourage financial partners to cooperate with this initiative, and recommend that it ensures an effective interaction with the institutional landscape at regional level.

Participants:

Belgium

France

Germany

Japan

Norway

United Kingdom

United States of America

European Union

African Development Bank

World Bank