



Brussels, 1 June 2016

Dear CBFP Partners,

It is a pleasure for me to write to you in my capacity as Facilitator of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) on behalf of the European Union for the period until the end of 2017.

I am an official of the European Commission presently serving as a Senior Adviser for Policy Definition in the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development. Throughout my professional career I have worked in development cooperation in various capacities, including as the European Commission Director for East and Southern Africa, Indian Ocean and Pacific, and I am honoured to have been entrusted the important task of Facilitator of CBFP. In this assignment I will be assisted by my Deputy, Mr. Maxime Nzita Nganga di Mavambu, based in Yaoundé, and our Facilitation Team (see Attachment 1).

Attached you will find the EU FACILITATION ROAD MAP (Attachment 2), which sets out the objectives and related main actions which our facilitation intends to pursue during the facilitation period.

The overarching objective of our effort will be to reinforce and develop CBFP, in order to safeguard its relevance and enhance its impact and sustainability. We believe that this is required in order to make sure that the Partnership continues to effectively promote the key objectives enunciated in the **1999 Yaoundé Declaration** and made operational through the **2005 COMIFACTreaty** regarding the conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa.

To do this, we will on the one hand pursue a set of objectives aiming to **promote more efficient interaction and cooperation in CBFP** and, on the other hand, promote a set of **thematic** objectives with a particular focus on certain **challenges of growing importance to the Congo Basin Forests**, including **poaching and wildlife trafficking**, the impact of non-forestry sectors and related land-use decisions, sustainable economic development of local communities and climate change.

The attached paper reflects our current planning. However, throughout the facilitation period we will maintain a flexible and dynamic approach, ready to adjust our strategy based on experience, in order to promote our overarching objective as effectively as possible.

One of the key objectives of our facilitation is to reinforce the Partnership by **creating a results-oriented structure through the establishment of a CBFP Council composed of representatives of groupings of the main categories of CBFP partners**, as described in more detail in the attached document entitled EU FACILITATION PROPOSALS ON REINFORCED CBFP GOVERNANCE (Attachment 2).

Our aim in putting forward these proposals is to strengthen communication, interaction and policy dialogue inside the Partnership, while safeguarding the established role and working arrangements of the annual CBFP Meetings of Parties. We believe that taking these steps is necessary in order to make possible effective facilitation in the future. This reinforcement of the structures of CBFP will also need to be reflected in an updated version of the CBFP Cooperation Framework, which we intend to propose at a later stage.

A preliminary version of this document was discussed at a working meeting in Kinshasa on 11 May organised by our facilitation. To that meeting we had invited a few actors from each main category of CBFP partners. As you can see from the attached brief MINUTES from that discussion (Attachment 3), there was broad support among participants for our proposals. However, as expected, a number of specific and very pertinent points were made on the draft proposals, which we have now attempted to take into account in the revised document attached to this letter. We will follow up at a later stage with further more detailed specifications on individual points. However, the gist of the reform we propose should be clear from this document.

A key feature of our proposals is the **establishment of "colleges"** corresponding to the main categories of CBFP partners. At the Kinshasa meeting, we asked participants to make contact with their respective peers in each category of partners to initiate the formation of their respective colleges. Within each college it will in particular be important to discuss and agree on working arrangements (procedures for exchange of information and formation of collective opinions etc) and how the college will be represented on the CBFP Council (two Council seats available to each college). In this context I should mention that only CBFP members will be included in the colleges and thus be able to influence the work of the CBFP Council. We need to seek timely agreement on at least provisional arrangements within each college in order for the CBFP Council to be able to start working in a meaningful way.

Getting this process underway is a key short term priority for our facilitation. I hope that you share our assessment that investing in building these colleges is a worthwhile and important step to reinforce our Partnership and I would like to ask all of you for your support in this endeavour. The EU Facilitation Team stands ready to support this work, but it is very clear to us that we will only be able to meet our objectives of strengthening CBFP governance, if there is sufficiently strong buy-in on the part of all CBFP partners allowing for a sufficiently strong interaction within each respective college.

For your information, I attach a written CONTRIBUTION OF THE CBFP DONOR COLLEGE (Attachment 4), which I have received. I believe this constitutes a good example of cooperation at college level and would welcome the possibility to share similar contributions from other colleges at a later stage.

Now, looking ahead to key upcoming CBFP events I am happy to announce that it is our intention to organise the **16th Meeting of Parties in Kigali on 17-21 October 2016**. We hope to be able to confirm the venue and dates as soon as we have completed the necessary consultations with the Rwandan authorities.

In order to prepare this meeting as customary, we will in the immediate future be initiating work at the technical level. Further details on this event will be communicated to you later, as our planning gradually firms up.

Our ambition is also to hold a first constituting meeting of the CBFP Council back-to-back with the Meeting of Parties in Kigali. This presupposes, however, that we have seen sufficient progress in the formation of the colleges which will form the basis for the Council.

Finally, I am happy to welcome two **new members** to the CBFP, namely **Rainforest Foundation UK** and **African Parks Network**.

In closing, I and my colleagues in the EU Facilitation Team look forward to working with all of you on this our common venture, which constitutes an important international collaborative effort.

Looking forward to meeting you all, I remain

Yours sincerely,



Anders Henriksson
European Union Facilitator of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership
European Commission
Brussels, Belgium

Attachments:

- (1) CBFP: EU Facilitation Team 2016-2017
- (2) CBFP: EU Facilitation Road Map 2016-2017
- (3) EU Facilitation proposals on reinforced CBFP governance
- (4) Minutes from Working Meeting in Kinshasa on 11 May 2016
- (5) Contribution of the CBFP Donor College