

SCIENTIFIC STEERING COMMITTEE

First In-Person Meeting, Nairobi, 8-10 July 2024

MEETING REPORT

This document provides a note for the record of the meeting proceedings, with a brief overview of decisions on the approach, structure, content, and processes for the 2025 Assessment Report. It was produced by the SPCB Secretariat for the benefit of meeting participants and members of the SSC not able to attend in person; It does not (and cannot) provide a detailed account of discussions for external parties.

For additional information please contact the Secretariat at info@SPCongoBasin.org.



Group photo with all participants, including Co-Chairs, Special Envoy, members of the Scientific Steering Committee, Lead Authors, Secretariat, and organizing team.

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1. OVERVIEW OF THE MEETING

This Nairobi meeting constituted the first in-person meeting of the Science Panel for the Congo Basin since its official launch at COP28 in December 2023. It convened members of the Panel's Scientific Steering Committee, as well as additional lead authors for the 2025 Assessment Report. While not all members of the SSC were able to come to Nairobi, the turnout was high with a total of 24 participants, including scientists from all six countries in the Congo Basin: Cameroon, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of Congo. In addition, the scientists were joined by the recently appointed Special Envoy for the Panel, Dr. Lee White, and members of the Secretariat at SDSN.



Plenary Meeting Room at ICRAF in Nairobi

The two-day meeting was hosted by the World Agroforestry Center ICRAF in Gigiri, Nairobi. ICRAF is a premier Agroforestry research center which also has offices and operations in Cameroon and the DRC. This venue provided opportunities for side meetings and the involvement of senior scientists, including a welcoming address by Dr Peter Minang, Director of Africa at CIFOR-ICRAF, a tour of ICRAF grounds (including two Labs), and an overview of ICRAF and the research at ICRAF. The Nairobi campus hosts one of the most advanced soil research institutes in the world, where over 400 researchers from IRD, CIRAD, and other partners work with some 6,000 samples of primarily African and Asian soils.

During a formal dinner on the first evening, the group was joined by senior officials of the UN Environment Programme, and regional directors of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), and World Resources Institute (WRI) Africa. The meeting concluded on a third day following a presentation of local restoration programmes at Karura Forest.

2. MEETING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The meeting had been planned as a dedicated work meeting for the Co-Chairs and SSC members to jointly review work done over the past months to draft the preliminary framework of the 2025 Assessment Report (AR). The agenda was designed to allow for joint review, discussions and agreement on all key aspects and necessary changes to the framework of the AR as a basis for the Panel's work in 2024 and 2025.

For a detailed overview of the meeting's overall objectives, expected outcomes, and outputs kindly contact the SPCB Secretariat for the meeting documentation.

AR approach and methods

Session 1: WG review and proposals
Session 2: Plenary review and agreement

AR framework, layout and content

Session 3: WG review and proposals
Session 4: Plenary review and agreement

AR authors, organization

Session 5: WG review and proposals
Session 6: Plenary review and agreement

The **main objective** of the meeting was to prepare the SSC and lead authors to start developing the 2025 Assessment Report in earnest. For this, they needed to confirm the report's overall scope and chapter structure; identify any gaps still to be addressed; to consult and find agreement on key aspects related to the AR writing and review process on the basis of the 2024-2025 timeline; and to confirm the domain and expertise areas still missing which are in need of additional authors.



Panel Co-Chairs Drs Raphaël Tshimanga, Lydie-Stella Koutika, Bonaventure Sonké

Expected Outcomes: Agreed overall expected outcomes of the Nairobi meeting included:

1. **A solid annotated framework and outline** of the 2025 Assessment Report.
2. **A list of existing knowledge and expertise gaps** that require further development, and an inclusive engagement approach of scientists.
3. **A confirmed roster of scientists and partners** to deliver a high quality internationally peer-reviewed assessment.
4. **Collective development and collaboration** between the involved scientists.
5. **Key messages** ahead COP16 (Oct. 2024), COP29 (Nov. 2024), and COP30 (Nov. 2025).



Participants during plenary discussions on day 1

3. DECISIONS, AGREEMENTS, AND ISSUES RAISED

In alternating plenary discussions and working group sessions, the members of the Scientific Steering Committee and Lead Authors jointly reviewed and discussed the background documents provided by the Secretariat. The documents were developed by the Co-Chairs, Section Coordinators, and Lead Authors over the course of the past six months and were coordinated by the Science Officer and Secretariat team.

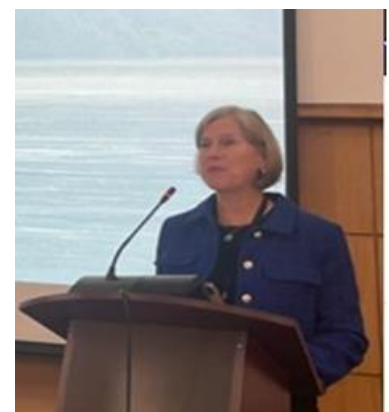
Together in both working groups and the plenary, the participants took advantage of the allocated time to discuss and explore a joint way forward on almost all decision items. Agreements could indeed be found on most issues, with few specific items deferred to processes that also involve Section Coordinators who were not present in Nairobi. A preliminary overview of these decisions is listed below; the Secretariat will further share revised documents that reflect the discussions on the assessment report.



*SPCB Special Envoy
Dr Lee White*

During his opening address, Dr. Lee White, newly appointed Special Envoy to the Panel, placed the panel's relevance in a broader regional, global, and political context, and underlined the importance of its efforts not just for the conservation and stability of the region but the continent as a whole.

This was also picked up by Susan Gardner from the UN Environment Program (UNEP) who linked the panel's mission to the role of the UN in the context of existing multilateral initiatives for tropical forest conservation and restoration. She also indicated her organization's support to the Panel and the Assessment Report process.



*Susan Gardner,
Director of the Ecosystems Division, UNEP*

3.1 Agreed documents and changes

Regarding the AR timeline:

It was agreed to keep the proposed timeline which provides that the panel will produce a first draft of the AR at the **end of September 2024**. A more detailed timeline for the AR process for the time after September 2024 will be developed and shared by the Secretariat.

Regarding the AR General Framework:

SSC members and authors reviewed the proposed structure and layout of the sections and chapters and made the **following changes**:

Section 1: Agreed upon with no changes.

Section 2: Agreed with suggestions endorsed by the plenary:

- Chapter 8 to be moved to Section 1; Chapter 9 to be moved to Chapter 17; Chapter 17 to be moved to Section 3.
- Five more chapters to be created: On Pastoralism (transhumance), 1- Indigenous knowledge; on Restoration; on Diseases and wildlife in the Congo Basin; on Politics and policies of the management of natural resources.

Section 3: Agreed without changes, pending inputs from the section coordinator (absent).

Section 4: Agreed without changes but more discussions are needed to refine the content.

Regarding content and scope of individual chapters:

SSC members and authors reviewed the proposed scope and content of the sections and chapters and made the **following changes**:

Section 1: Intro, chapters 1, 2, 5, and 8 endorsed by the plenary, except chapters 4, 6, and 7.

Section 2: Content of all chapters endorsed by plenary except former chapters 15, 16, and 18.

Section 3: Content of all chapters created, discussed, and endorsed by the plenary, pending inputs by the section coordinator, except the former chapter 24 (Climate Change Future Impacts on Biodiversity, Ecosystem Functions and Services).

Section 4: The presented chapter content was endorsed, pending further conversations with lead authors and other section coordinators. After shifting some chapters, there was an agreement to add 3 more new chapters to this section, which now comprises a total of six chapters. These changes were made effective in the revised and annotated AR framework.

Regarding authors:

The group discussed and agreed on the importance of organizing authors well across chapters, including on the benefits of having two **Lead Authors** for each Chapter while ensuring that one of them would be exclusive, i.e. just Lead Author for this one chapter. It was also agreed that all authors considered both the required time commitments and their own availability; existing lead authors were asked to propose replacements if they needed to withdraw from a chapter.

Regarding language:

It was agreed that in line with scientific standards, ENGLISH would be the language of the AR, including for the drafting process: draft chapter texts will be prepared and submitted by

respective lead authors to the Secretariat in English. Contributing authors who preferred to write in French or Spanish would be able to do so, with subsequent online translations to consolidate English draft texts. The group agreed that the responsibility was with the Lead Authors to ensure that the translations maintained the essential message by its authors, and to edit all texts before submission to internal and external peer reviews.

Regarding quality and peer-review process:

The proposed approach was endorsed by the plenary with an additional layer: an internal step early in the process for contributing authors, Lead Authors, and Section Coordinators to review chapters before they are sent out for external review.

Regarding editorial guidelines:

It was discussed and agreed to replace the proposed editorial guidelines with the referencing style of a lead journal (e.g. Science, Nature, Placebo, APA, etc.), to be proposed and agreed by the Co- Chairs following the meeting.



Working Group discussion of Section 2 Coordinators and lead authors

3.2 Agreed processes for follow up

Section 1: Section Coordinators will follow up with their respective lead authors to agree on the content of chapters 4, 6, and 7.

Section 2: Section Coordinators will follow up with lead authors on the content of former chapters 15, 16, and 18, as well as newly created chapters.

Section 3: It was agreed within the group that:

- An In-person workshop should be organized in Sep, in the presence of Modeling experts, **pending availability of financial resources.**
- Inter-section meetings: Lead authors should be meeting frequently once a month so that we can communicate with other sections.
- Intra section meetings: Within the section lead authors will organize monthly meetings.

Section 4: Due to the limited number of members and authors, it was agreed that Section 4 Coordinators have to organize a meeting to go through materials endorsed by the plenary to see where adjustments may be still needed.

For all sections:

- All Section Coordinators plan to organize at least one meeting per month with lead authors to discuss the progress within their section.
- Lead authors need to organize at least one meeting per month with contributing authors to discuss the writing-up process as well as the progress being achieved.
- Internal reviews will need to be conducted in a timely manner to allow the secretariat in early 2025 to send reviewed chapters out for the external review; chapters will be reviewed as they come through.



Panel speakers on the role of Indigenous knowledge and autochthone communities

3.3 Other discussions and issues

Throughout the 2-and-a-half days participants raised several other important aspects and issues relevant for the development of the 2025 Assessment Report. These were recorded and will be taken up by the Co-Chairs, respective Section Coordinators, and Lead Authors in the following weeks. In some cases, the Secretariat will explore possibilities to organize dedicated in-person or hybrid meetings, seminars or workshops across relevant sections. Possible themes include the discussion of modeling and scenario development; the integration of issues related to Indigenous and autochthone knowledge; possible solution spaces and opportunities, e.g. from bioeconomy and markets; etc.

One specific issue that was flagged for its relevance and timing was that of copyrights related to content of the Assessment Report. It was shared that similar exercises had taken 2-3 months on similar occasions.



Final discussions in the working groups at Karura Forest

4. MATERIALS REVIEWED AND MODIFIED DURING THE MEETING

Prior to the meeting, the Secretariat had already circulated up-to-date drafts of several documents for preparation and as basis for discussions during the meeting.

These included:

Draft general framework for the Assessment Report: An overview of the envisaged overall content and scope of the AR, broken into sections and the then-current list of chapters. The document was carefully reviewed in both plenary and section working groups; a revised version based on the reviews and proposed changes will be prepared by the SPCB Science Officer and shared after the Meeting.

Overview list of AR authors: The document provided an up-to-date list of Section Coordinators and authors, by section and chapter. The document was carefully reviewed in both plenary and working groups; a revised version with updated chapters and authors will be prepared by the Science Officer.

Proposed chapter layout of the Report: A draft document with additional indications of technical content was provided during the meeting in support of working group discussions. A revised version reflecting the discussions and proposed changes will be developed together with the Section Coordinators.

Draft editorial guidelines: A draft document with editorial guidance was provided in advance of the meeting. A revised version will be based on the style and referencing guide of a specific scientific journal, to be agreed by the Co-Chairs and shared by the Science Officer.

Draft peer review approach: A note with a proposed approach to the important issue of quality assurance and peer review had been shared ahead of the meeting. The Approach was approved in principle and operationalized by the secretariat for approval by the Co-Chairs and SSC.

In addition to the documents that were shared before or during the meeting, the Secretariat was asked to provide written documents on additional aspects (see separate communication).

Advanced SPCB timeline: SSC members requested the Secretariat to generate a more detailed operational timeline for the work of the Panel for the time after September 2024, to be shared in the weeks following the Meeting.

Overview of proposed Honoraria for AR authors: Co-chairs and Secretariat provided a verbal summary of a proposed approach to provide basic honoraria to the authors of the AR, in line with earlier discussions and against the possibilities in the SPCB budget. Based on the feedback the Secretariat will work with the Co-Chairs on a formal approach and explore concrete parameters to operationalize the honoraria payments accordingly.



Discussions among the three Co-Chairs and the Strategic Coordinator.



Concluding appreciation of Co-Chairs and Secretariat

ANNEX

Annex 1: Meeting agenda (de facto)

DAY 1: Monday, 8 July 2024

- 11:00** **Welcome and opening of the work meeting**
*SPCB Co-Chairs Dr Raphaël Tshimanga, Dr Lydie-Stella Koutika, Dr Bonaventure Sonké
SPCB Special Envoy Dr Lee White*
Introduction for all participants
Meeting Facilitator: Carole Tankeu
Welcome greetings by Dr Peter Minang, Director for Africa, ICRAF World Agroforestry
Housekeeping and logistics update, as needed
- 11:45** **Objectives, expected outputs and outcomes of the work meeting**
Emma Torres and Dr Bila-Isia Inogwabini, SPCB Secretariat
Material: Overview of outcomes, outputs and work tasks in document in the folder
Setting the stage: How did we get here, what happened already, where are we going?
Questions, clarifications and discussion
EXPECTED OUTCOME OF DAY 1: Agreement on the overall approach, structure, timeline and working methods of the 2025 AR
- 12:30 Joint lunch with special guests Group photo
- 14:00** **Session 1: Working groups on AR approach, structure, timeline and working methods**
Facilitators: AR Section Coordinators, with rapporteurs selected from the groups
Material: Overview documents in the pre-reading package
TASK: Joint review to settle key items and identify remaining issues, gaps, questions
- 15:30 Tea and coffee break
- 15:45** **Session 2: Plenary review of working group proposals: discussion and agreement**
Co-Chairs: Dr Raphaël Tshimanga, Emma Torres
EXPECTED OUTPUT S2: Agreement on needed adjustments and clarifications to the AR approach, structure, timelines and working methods, incl process to address final changes.
- 17:30** **Wrap up Day 1: review of progress and outputs**
Special Envoy Dr Lee White

DAY 2: Tuesday, 9 July 2024

- 9:15** **Welcome back and outlook day 2**
Tea/Coffee, Housekeeping and logistics update, as needed
Meeting Facilitator: Carole Tankeu
Overview SPCB Co-Chairs, SPCB Secretariat

EXPECTED OUTCOME OF DAY 2: Agreement on the AR scope and content, with identified gaps and need for revisions for the final AR Framework and corresponding implications on authorship and writing processes

9:30 Address by Dr Susan Gardner, Director Ecosystems Division, UNEP

10:00 Session 3: Working groups on AR framework sections, chapters and content outlines

Facilitators: AR Section Coordinators, with rapporteurs selected from the lead authors

Material: Overview documents in the pre-reading package

TASK: Joint review to settle key items and identify remaining issues, gaps, questions

11:30 Tea and coffee break

12:00 Working Groups (continued)

12:30 Perspectives: The role of Indigenous and autochthone knowledge and communities

Panel discussion, led by Kapupu diwa Multimanwa and Dr Salomon Mampeta

13:15 Joint lunch at ICRAF

14:30 Session 4: Plenary review of Working Group tasks discussions and agreements

Co-Chairs: Dr Lydie-Stella Koutika, Dr Bonaventure Sonké

EXPECTED OUTPUT S4: Agreement on needed adjustments and clarifications to the AR scope and content of sections and chapters, incl proposals for resolution of open issues.

15:45 Tea and coffee break

16:00 Session 6: Plenary review of AR authorship and organizational aspects (incl Session 5)

Chairs: Dr Bonaventure Sonké

EXPECTED OUTPUT S6: Agreement on needed adjustments and clarifications to the AR authorship, including gaps in domains and research profiles, proposals for addressing gaps.

17:30 Closing of day two and outlook

DAY 3: Wednesday, 10 July 2024

9:30 *Walk and guided tour of Karura Forest*

Professor Njoroge Karanja, Friends of Karura Forest

11:00 Welcome back and review of status on meeting objectives

Carole Tankeu, with Emma Torres

11:15 Overtime: Session to resolve and conclude final outputs and outlook 2024/2025

EXPECTED OUTPUTS: Agreement on all final outstanding issues and elements for the SPCB to move forward; needed adjustments and clarifications to the AR authorship, including gaps in domains and research profiles, and proposals for addressing gaps.

12:45 Appreciation and outlook to the work of the SSC and AR writing teams

*SPCB Co-Chairs Dr Raphaël Tshimanga, Dr Lydie-Stella Koutika, Dr Bonaventure Sonké
Emma Torres, Cecil Haverkamp and Dr Bila-Isia Inogwabini*

From 13:00 Closing lunch

Annex 2: Participant list (de facto)

Last Name	First Name	Affiliation	Role	Country
Tshimanga	Raphaël	University of Kinshasa	Co-Chair	DRC
Koutika	Lydie-Stella	Research Center on Productivity and Sustainability of Industrial Plantations(CRDPI)	Co-Chair	ROC
Sonké	Bonaventure	University of Yaoundé I	Co-Chair	CAM
White	Lee	University of Sterling	Special Envoy	GAB
Multimanwa	Kapupu diwa	Network of Indigenous and Local Populations for the Sustainable Management of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa (REPLEAC)	Community Representative	DRC
Ngomanda	Alfred	National Center for Scientific and Technological Research (CENAREST)	SSC Member	GAB
Nguimalet	Cyriaque-Rufin	University of Bangui	SSC Member	CAR
Palla	Florence	Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC)	SSC Member	CAM
Longandjo	Georges-Noel	Institut Supérieur des Techniques Appliquées	SSC Member	DRC
Moukandi	Guy	University of Marien Ngouabi	SSC Member	ROC
Taedoumg	Hermann	University of Yaoundé I	SSC Member	CAM
Semeki Ngabinzeke	Jean	University of Kinshasa	SSC Member	DRC
Braun	Jean-Jacques	Institute of Research for Development (IRD)	SSC Member	FRA/GAB
Temgoua	Lucie	University of Dschang	SSC Member	CAM
Fero	Maximiliano	National University of Equatorial Guinea	SSC Member	EQG
Van Vliet	Nathalie	Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)	SSC Member	COL
Pokam	Wilfried	University of Yaoundé I	SSC Member	CAM
Kenfack	David	Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute	Lead Author	USA
Takem	Delphine	Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation	Lead Author	CAM
Kadima Kabongo	Etienne	University of Lubumbashi	Lead Author	DRC
Zapfack	Louis	University of Yaoundé	Lead Author	CAM
Ibrahim Mahmoud	Mahmoud	National Oil Spill Detection Response Agency (NOSDRA)	Lead Author	NIG
Libalah	Moses	University of Yaoundé I	Lead Author	CAM
Mampeta	Salomon	University of Kisangani	Lead Author	DRC
Venkataramana	Sridhar	Virginia Polytechnic and State University	Lead Author	IND/USA

Secretariat

Last Name	First Name	Affiliation	Role	Location
Torres	Emma	Vice-President, SDSN	Strategic Coordinator	New York
Inogwabini	Bila-Isia	Consultant, SDSN	Science Officer	Kinshasa
Haverkamp	Cecil	Director FELD, SDSN	Director	Paris/Aix
Collie	Rachel	Programme Manager, SDSN	Manager	Paris
Potter	Lila	Special Assistant, SDSN	Associate	New York
Tankeu	Carole	Meeting Facilitator	Associated Director, S2	Nairobi
Collis	Jilna	Event planner		Nairobi

Acknowledgments

On behalf of the Science Panel for the Congo Basin, its Co-Chairs, members of the Scientific Steering Committee and lead authors, the Secretariat wants to express its deep gratitude to a number of organizations and individuals who helped in the organization of the meeting. In Nairobi, we thank our local hosts and partners at ICRAF-CIFOR World Agroforestry for accommodating us at their wonderful premises, as well as the warm welcome by its staff and resident scientists; our contacts and partners at UNEP and UNON who were helpful in exploring opportunities for the meeting to take place at UN Compound, and for their commitment to support the Panel going forward; and to Professor Karanja Njoroge and his colleagues at the Friends of Karura Forest for their tour and presentation on their 'social restoration' efforts.

We are also grateful to colleagues at WRI Africa for their valuable guidance and resources; and to the various vendors and suppliers from the Hotel, transport and travel agencies, expertly coordinated by Jilna Collis whose support, commitment and tireless efforts allowed the meeting to succeed. Finally our thanks to Carole Tankeu for her able and skilled facilitation of the meeting and discrete but effective efforts to keep everyone happy, motivated and on schedule.

At SDSN, we want to thank especially colleagues in the Operations Team for their patience, commitment and responsiveness throughout the process. Final acknowledgements also to our funders and partners supporting the Panel's mission.

For comments, corrections and other suggestions, please contact the Panel Secretariat at SDSN, info@SPCongobasin.org.

Annex 3: Tentative Panel timeline 2024-25

As requested by the SSC, the Secretariat will develop a more detailed operational timeline for the work of the panel during the remainder of 2024, and throughout 2025 leading up to COP30 in Belem. The following overview represents only the main milestones and processes for the panel as a whole; a more detailed timeline will include Section and Chapter-specific processes and key dates, to be developed by the Secretariat in coordination with the Section Coordinators in the coming weeks.

[Timeline: Main panel activities with focus on the 2025 Assessment Report, by quarter](#)

CC: Co-Chair meetings; SSC: Scientific Steering Committee meetings; SC: Section Coordinators

	Q3/2024	Q4/2024	Q1/2025	Q2/2025	Q3/2025	Q4/2025
	<i>July-Sept 2024</i>	<i>Oct-Dec 2024</i>	<i>Jan-Mar 2025</i>	<i>Apr-June 2025</i>	<i>July-Sept 2025</i>	<i>Oct-Dec 2025</i>
Governance	SSC In-person meeting	Monthly CC, SSC, SC meetings	Monthly CC, SSC, SC meetings	SSC In-person (tbc)	Monthly CC, SSC, SC meetings	Adoption and launch of 2025 AR
Assessment Report	Draft 1 Sep 2024	Int review of Draft 1 Pres. at COP16/29	Draft 2 April 2025	Final draft June 2025	External reviews Editing, translation Ex Sum	Publication COP30 launch
Outreach & consultations	Donors UNGA, SOTF	Govts, regional Inst, Donors at COP16/29	Regional UNEP	Regional and global science community	UN Regional institutions and Govts	COP30 presidency Govts
Comm-unications	Media (traditional and social)	Media around COPs	Website Media	Media briefings	Media Website	Media Website
Secretariat planning	In person meeting prep Setup writing teams & infrastructure	COP prep Materials Fundraising	Support writing teams	Organize external reviews, editing, translations	Finalization of 2025 AR, incl ExSum Launch prep	COP launch and events Media work Follow up

Milestones

2024

Sep: Submission of first section drafts

Oct: COP16 with SPCB involvement

Nov: COP29 with SPCB involvement

2025

Feb (tbc): Second in-person SSC and LA meeting April

(tbc): Submission of second draft

May: Writing workshops for sections (tbc)

June: Submission of final drafts for external review

July: External review in parallel to editing & comms

Sep: Consolidated revised and edited final AR

Oct: Translations of AR and Executive Summary

Nov: AR launch and publication at COP30

Annex 4: Photo Gallery

Dinner with meeting participants and external guests from ICRAF, UNEP, TNC, AWF and WRI Africa



Andrea Hinwood, Chief Scientist, UNEP



Ademola Ajagbe, Regional Director Africa, TNC



Rebekah Shirley, Deputy Director, WRI Africa



Fred Kumah, Vice President, Africa Wildlife Foundation