

Roundtable

Sustainable forestry in the Congo Basin. A contribution to the Fair Deal discussion

LSE
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When: 28th May 2025

Where: Centre Building LSE Lecture Theatre (Ground Floor)

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Concept note

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Background: The Congo Basin, home to the second-largest rainforest in the world, is a critical global resource that plays a vital role in biodiversity conservation, climate regulation, and the livelihoods of millions of people. As the countries in Central Africa aspire to structure their ecological transition while simultaneously accelerating economic growth, the sustainable management of forest resources is a top priority. However, the complexity of the socio-economic landscape, coupled with environmental challenges, necessitates a nuanced understanding of what sustainable forestry means in this context.

Chair:
Professor Lord Stern
of Brentford

In the framework of harmonious international cooperation, a "Fair Deal Task Force" was officially launched on November 14, 2022, at UNFCCC COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh by ministers from COMIFAC, Germany, and the UK, along with senior officials from several governments, CBFP partners, and COMIFAC countries. The task force aims to develop key elements for the political debate on long-term sustainable financing of ecological services from Congo Basin forests and peatlands, in line with the "COMIFAC Declaration" of September 2021 in Berlin (COMIFAC, 2021). The objectives of the task force are: (1) to develop a vision for the coordination and implementation of sustainable financing for the policies and action programs of the Congo Basin countries, and (2) to propose a fair payment mechanism for ecosystem services from Central

African forests, which would be permanent and ensure a fair share of funding to support the development prospects of the Congo Basin countries. The "Fair Deal Task Force" has also identified key questions that need to be addressed in the development of the fair deal mechanism, including inquiries related to the appropriateness of intact forests or high-integrity forests and a comprehensive, updated understanding of sustainable forestry in the Congo Basin (COMIFAC, 2023).

Since Sharm El Sheikh, the global forestry landscape has been evolving with various dynamics, particularly within the UNFCCC and CBD frameworks. The year 2025 marks a significant turning point, as the role of forests in ecological transition will be at the centre of key discussions. With only six months to go before the next UNFCCC COP in Brazil, the LSE is hosting a day of reflection on the review of sustainable forestry. This event aims to ensure that the current realities of sustainable forestry are considered and that all stakeholders interested in the management of the Congo Basin are informed. The goal is to foster harmonious cooperation between the countries of the Congo Basin and those in the Global North who are invested in the communities and ecosystems of the region.

General Objective:

Assess the evolving implications of sustainable forestry in the Congo Basin, with the aim of improving understanding and collaboration for equitable resource management that supports the region's aspirations for emerging economies.

Specific Objectives:

1. Explore sustainable forestry from the perspective of natural capital accounting, with a focus on the valuation of forest ecosystems and their contributions to the economy and society.
2. Analyse the economic implications of sustainable forestry practices, with a focus on the forest economy and the potential of sustainable forest management to stimulate economic growth in the Congo Basin.
3. Gather relevant perspectives from different countries to ensure that considerations relating to sustainable forestry reflect the socio-economic and ecological realities specific to the region.

Methodology:

This day of reflection will be structured around three sessions, each comprising PowerPoint presentations and case studies presented by experts from various backgrounds (scientists from different disciplines) and institutions (universities, international organisations, civil society and governments based in Central Africa, as well as those from the North with extensive experience in tropical regions). Each session will be followed by a question-and-answer session.

Expected Outcomes:

- An in-depth and contextualised analysis of sustainable forestry, incorporating different perspectives.

- The identification of key strategies and recommendations to promote sustainable forestry practices in the Congo Basin.
- Strengthened collaboration among stakeholders, fostering a shared commitment to sustainable development in the region.
- A policy brief on sustainable forestry that will serve as the basis for the agenda for a 'fair deal' ahead of the 2025 conference in Brazil.

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