

Congo Basin Pledge Report 2024

November
2025



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Cover photograph: A cooperative member next to a teak tree in Yoko, Cameroon (© GIZ)

Opening Statement by the CBFP Co-Facilitation



Dr. Aurélie Flore Koumba Pambo,
Co-Facilitator for the Republic of Gabon



Salina Grenet-Catalano,
Co-Facilitator for the Republic of France

As co-facilitators of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), France and Gabon are honoured to present a joint introductory statement in connection with the Congo Basin Pledge Report 2024 – marking another milestone in our shared commitment to safeguarding the forests and peatlands of the Congo Basin.

Launched at COP26 in Glasgow, the Congo Basin Pledge united governments, institutions and philanthropies around a common goal: mobilising at least USD 1.5 billion from 2021 to 2025 for the protection and sustainable management of the region's forests and peatlands. As the period covered by this Report came to an end and when there was one year of the Pledge still remaining, this target had already been surpassed by almost 30%, fully reflecting the leadership of the Congo Basin countries and their partners. Some of the significant progress jointly achieved is highlighted in the case studies presented in this Report, submitted by various donors.

In 2024, cooperation intensified and regional ownership of the strategic priorities of the Congo Basin grew stronger. The CBFP worked tirelessly with its members to consolidate regional and national priorities, promote inclusive governance and highlight the vital role of each of its colleges in shaping a sustainable future for the Congo Basin. Yet challenges remain – from land-use pressures and limited access to finance, to governance and capacity constraints. Addressing these challenges demands continued political will, innovative financing solutions and stronger accountability.

We therefore welcome the innovations that have emerged, several of which can channel new investments while guaranteeing environmental and social norms. Sustainable development in the Congo Basin is not only an ecological necessity. Protecting these forests must go hand-in-hand with promoting human rights and local prosperity. Only by following such an integrated approach can conservation and development truly reinforce one another.

Building on the achievements of the last four years and the latest innovations, the co-facilitators have mobilised all the relevant partners over the last few months in order to design a successor to the Congo Basin Pledge. Our work has resulted in an ambitious call to action for the Congo Basin forests that presents common goals and reciprocal commitments between Central African countries and international partners, while strengthening accountability and transparency. We are looking forward to launching it at COP30!

As the Congo Basin Pledge comes to an end in 2025, we extend our deep gratitude to all of the partners – especially the donors of the Congo Basin Pledge, whose contributions have shaped this Report – for their reliable and strong engagement. Together, we will continue to increase our collective efforts and advance a resilient, prosperous and sustainable future for the Congo Basin and the planet.

Dr. Aurélie Flore Koumba Pambo and Salina Grenet-Catalano

Introduction

The Congo Basin Pledge is a landmark commitment made at COP26 in Glasgow in 2021 by twelve major donors¹ to collectively provide at least US\$1.5 billion in financing between 2021 and 2025 to protect and maintain the ecosystems in the Congo Basin. The pledge was launched in recognition of the critical contribution that Central Africa's Congo Basin - the world's second-largest tropical rainforest - makes to global climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and the livelihoods of millions of people in the region. The Congo Basin is home to vast forests, peatlands, and other vital carbon sinks that play a key role in regulating the global climate. Through this pledge, donors aim to support ambitious, inclusive, and sustainable efforts to protect, restore, and manage these ecosystems, while also strengthening the rights and participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

This is the fourth Annual Progress Report on the Congo Basin Pledge, providing an update on donor spending over the period from January to December 2024. It follows the previous reports presented at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, COP28 in Dubai, and COP29 in Baku, where Congo Basin Pledge donors reported what they had collectively delivered since COP26 in Glasgow. The report offers an account of progress made towards fulfilling the financial commitments and highlights key case studies shared by the donors.

Methodology and Context

The Congo Basin Pledge Report 2024 follows the same methodology as in previous years. To assess progress towards the Pledge, each participating donor submitted their 2024 expenditure data to Germany and the African Development Bank (AfDB), co-chairs of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) Donor College. Where available, donors provided information on programme details, total funding amount (in original currencies), geographic focus, thematic areas, type of finance (grant, loan, equity, other), financing channel (bilateral or multilateral), and whether private finance was leveraged. All contributions are presented in USD, converted from each original currency using the 2024 exchange rates provided by the Organisation for Economic

¹ Belgium, Bezos Earth Fund, European Union (EU), France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States of America.

Co-operation and Development (OECD). The expenditure contribution methodology is aligned with financial reporting definitions from both the OECD and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).



Picture: Forest in Dombe (© Norad)

At COP26, two additional forest-related pledges were announced alongside the Congo Basin Pledge. The Global Forest Finance Pledge (GFFP) announced donors' intention to collectively provide \$12 billion in climate finance to forest-related programmes between 2021 and 2025. In parallel, 22 funders, including governments and private philanthropic organizations, announced a \$1.7 billion pledge in support of advancing Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' (IPLC) forest tenure rights in tropical forest countries, a recognition of the important role IPLCs play in protecting forests and nature.

While each of the three pledges is distinct, they are closely linked by their shared goals: conserving forests and acknowledging IPLCs as key forest stewards. Where a donor has committed funds to the GFFP and either the IPLC or the Congo Basin Pledge, donor funding is counted under both pledges. A similar overlap also occurs between the IPLC Pledge and Congo Basin Pledge when a donor has committed funds to both.

Although general guidance is available on accounting for forest-related activities, it remains at each donor's discretion to determine which programmes contribute to which pledge. Therefore, all reported contributions are included as submitted.

Pledge Spend Progress

Over the course of 2024, the fourth year of the pledge, donors who submitted data collectively spent US\$ 143.146.451 towards the Congo Basin Pledge. This figure excludes contributions from the United States and the European Commission², as data for the current reporting year has not been provided.

Taking donors' contributions in 2021, 2022 and 2023 into account, this means that US\$ 1.941.739.920 has been spent towards the Congo Basin Pledge since it was made at COP26. This represents 29.45% more than the amount initially pledged.

2024 contributions towards the Congo Basin Pledge (US\$)	
Total 2024 Provided	\$ 143.146.451
Total contributions towards the Congo Basin Pledge (2021-2024) (US\$)	
Total Contributions	\$ 1.941.739.920

Further information on individual donor contributions can be found on the websites of COMIFAC-OFAC³ and the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI)⁴.

Case Studies of 2024

Since COP26, progress towards meeting the US\$1.5 billion financial commitment has advanced steadily. However, the true measure of the Pledge's success lies in the positive and lasting impact it has on the ground - both in conserving the Congo Basin's forests and peatlands and in supporting the local communities who depend on them. The case studies below highlight concrete examples of how donors are contributing to the Pledge through targeted actions that promote forest protection and community resilience.

² The European Commission successfully fulfilled its commitments in 2023 and, as a result, did not provide further data contributions to the reporting under this pledge.

³ Website: <https://www.observatoire-comifac.net/>

⁴ Website: <https://cafi.org/>

Case Study 1: Forest, Environment and Climate Project in Cameroon

Background and Context

Cameroon is home to one of Africa's largest expanses of tropical forests, covering nearly 20 million hectares and representing about 43% of the national territory. However, the country faces significant challenges such as increased deforestation, soil degradation, and pressure on natural resources, exacerbated by climate change. These threats directly impact rural and indigenous communities who rely on forests and agriculture for their livelihoods.

In response, the GIZ Forest, Environment and Climate Project promotes sustainable, inclusive, and climate-friendly forest management, in collaboration with Cameroon's Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife and the Ministry of Environment, Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development. The project, developed jointly with its partners, promotes a community forest management approach in three municipalities in the forest areas of the Centre and East regions, in line with the National Forest Development Program. In Yoko, a municipality in the Centre region, local communities started planting teak trees (*tectona grandis*) in the buffer zones of the community forest with the support of the program, as part of a value chain approach in association with food crops such as Cassava, Corn and Beans, in an agroforestry system.

Local communities are responsible for implementing agroforestry management plans on individual plots, with each plot representing a surface area of 10 hectares. In 2023, 9 cooperatives were legalized with the support of the project – this promoted greater recognition and income. Awareness raising campaigns allowed women and marginalized groups to participate in sustainable agroforestry activities. This enabled 88 women and 16 members of the Mbororo, an indigenous pastoralist community, to integrate some of the cooperatives, making up an overall number of 180 members. To engage local communities in sustainable forest management and agroforestry production, the cooperative members participated in training sessions on team building, administrative and financial management, teak cultivation techniques as well as food crop good agricultural practices, inclusion of women and indigenous peoples in decision-making, conflict prevention related to natural resource exploitation, and land tenure security.



Picture: Teak - Common Initiative Groups tree nursery in Yoko (© GIZ)

By the end of 2024, the project achieved the following preliminary results:

Yoko's Teak Cooperatives established 76 hectares of agroforestry plantation with an 88% success rate, resulting in 46.000 teak plants averaging four meters in height after three years. Due to their resilience to weather and pests, members can expect harvesting high-value timber logs in 15 years. To prevent land disputes, traditional authorities have issued certificates of peaceful land use. The cooperatives are furthermore accompanied by GIZ to apply for provisional concessions covering 10 hectares of land for each group, which can be converted into a permanent concession after five years. Currently, the cooperative members earn income from intercropping food crops like cassava, maize, and beans as well as from sales of teak seedlings. This year, nurseries produced nearly 10.850 teak seedlings, generating €3.400 in sales. The project is also connecting with buyers to support marketing, as the market is still developing. Three local private companies, one working in the coffee sector have commercial linkages with the cooperatives.

Despite challenges such as irregular seasons, bushfires, limited technical skills and marketing difficulties, community agroforestry plots have significantly grown from 10

hectares at the project's launch in January 2023 to 110 hectares by August 2025. Sustainable forestry practices have improved, and income from plant and food crop sales have increased the small holder farmers independency. As the teak trees grow, communities can gradually increase their income, for example by supplying poles for electricity lines connected to the newly built Nachtigall Dam. The community approach led by the cooperatives with the support from GIZ and the municipality, effectively revitalizes the timber sector, improves food security, promotes economic resilience, and strengthens local governance. In addition, the remaining rainforest is protected, and, at the same time, local buffer zone communities gain new market opportunities.

Case Study 2: Forests for the Future Project in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Background and Context

In the Congo Basin, forest-dependent communities often live in and depend on some of the world's most biodiverse and climate-critical forests, yet lack secure rights to manage them. This leaves them vulnerable to destructive external pressures such as illegal logging, industrial agriculture and wildlife trafficking, which threaten both local livelihoods and the health of the global climate.

The Forests for the Future project addresses this challenge by supporting communities to gain legal recognition of their forests and to manage them sustainably. Working in the Equateur, Maniema and North-Kivu provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the project promotes a model of community forests, which are areas legally governed by the people living there and who abide by locally set rules and inclusive decision-making.

By combining land rights formalisation with governance training, sustainable livelihoods and forest monitoring, the project strengthens communities to safeguard their land, build resilience and lead conservation efforts. This approach offers a viable, rights-based alternative to extractive development, aligning environmental protection with community well-being and long-term sustainability.



Picture: Woman in Dombe (© Norad)

By the end of 2024, the project achieved the following preliminary results:

The Forests for the Future project has delivered tangible conservation and development outcomes in the DRC. Working with local and Indigenous communities, it has supported the legal establishment of 15 community forests securing 126.000 hectares across the Equateur, Maniema and North-Kivu provinces, home to over 28.000 people.

These forests are governed through inclusive local structures and simple management plans, enabling sustainable use of resources while protecting biodiversity. With

practical tools like ForestLink⁵ and ForestEye⁶ communities are detecting and reducing illegal logging, tackling wildlife trafficking and seeing the return of once-vanished species.

Livelihoods have improved through 49 producer associations, agricultural training and stronger value chains. Income from forest and farm products has supported schools, health centres and other local priorities, enhancing resilience and self-reliance for around 527 people, including 264 women and 24 Indigenous people. At the policy level, the project has, in cooperation with other networks and NGOs in the DRC, influenced national community forestry strategies and roundtables, indirectly contributing to the protection of over 4.5 million hectares nationwide.

By combining community rights, sustainable livelihoods and practical conservation, Forests for the Future has demonstrated a scalable, community-led model that benefits both people and the planet.

Case Study 3: Integrated REDD+ programme in Kwilu province (PIREDD Kwilu) in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Background and Context

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has been implementing the Project for Operationalization of the National Forest Resources Monitoring System and REDD+ Pilot in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)⁷. The project duration is six years and eight months, spanning from April 2019 to December 2025. The project aims to strengthen the operational capacity of the National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMS) and to implement the Integrated REDD+ program in Kwilu province (PIREDD Kwilu). JICA has been entrusted with approximately US\$ 9 million for PIREDD Kwilu, which is co-financed by CAFI and REDD+ National Fund (FONAREDD)⁸. PIREDD Kwilu seeks to avoid deforestation through sustainable forest management while improving the living conditions of local communities.

Located west of the city of Kinshasa capital city of DRC, Kwilu province has been facing a severe pressure on forest resources caused by slash-and-burn agriculture, charcoal

⁵ Website: <https://forestlink.org/>

⁶ Website: <https://deforestation.analysis.forestlink.org/foresteleye/app/>

⁷ Website: https://www.jica.go.jp/french/overseas/drc/activities/1556272_18670.html

⁸ Website: <https://cafi.org/project/piredd-kwilu/>

production, consumption of timber and firewood, population growth and extreme poverty etc. According to data from Global Forest Watch (2025), Kwilu province might have lost about 7.6% of its forest cover from 2010 to 2023. As Kwilu's vegetation consists mainly of savannahs, gallery forests and largely degraded natural forests, PIREDD-Kwilu's strategies consist in promoting reforestation in savannah areas, protecting forests along rivers and conserving remaining forests.



Picture: Wild animal captured by camera trap survey (© JICA)

By the end of 2024, the project achieved the following preliminary results:

PIREDD Kwilu has been supporting activities in approximately 270 villages to protect existing forests in collaboration with local communities by implementing agroforestry practices. This includes afforestation efforts such as planting acacia, fruit trees, and indigenous tree species.

With a one-year-and-eight-month extension from the expected end-period in June 2024, the project is now on the final stage before the completion in December 2025. As of 2024, agroforestry has been implemented on 5,627 hectares, which is about 97%

of the 5.800 hectares targeted. In addition, approximately 30.000 hectares out of 36.622 hectares targeted of forest have been identified for conservation through the Project by preparing simple land use plans via community participatory approach. Furthermore in 2024, JICA introduced camera traps to conduct biological monitoring surveys at some agroforestry sites, confirming increased recovery of fauna and flora following the planting.

The community has also benefited from ecosystem services including i) Provisioning services (food, water, energy resources), ii) Regulating services (climate regulation, rainfall soil maintenance), iii) Cultural services (recreation, traditions), (iv) Supporting services (soil formation, purification of water and air, prevention of infectious diseases), and (v) Conservation services (biodiversity), provided by the presence of the growing forest, highlighting the additional value derived from the biodiversity benefits of the Project. Despite the challenges faced during implementation, project activities are progressing diligently to achieve targets with solid results and ensure sustainability in the future.

Case Study 4: The Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI)

Background and Context

As part of their commitment to the Congo Basin Pledge, a diverse group of donors contributed to the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI), recognising it as a key funding mechanism to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, alleviate poverty, and accelerate sustainable development across the Congo Basin region.

In 2024, donor contributions to the CAFI Fund amounted to over USD 69.5 million, with total financial commitments reaching USD 115.6 million. These resources supported activities in six partner countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Republic of Congo. Throughout the year, implementation progressed steadily across 40 active projects (out of 66 funded since 2015), with approximately 81% of 2024 transfers going to the agriculture outcome. Implementation was facilitated through a broad and diverse network of partners, enabling scalable and transparent results.

CAFI further took significant steps in 2024 to operationalise Payments for Environmental Services (PES) as a core instrument in its programming toolbox. Building on eight years of practical experience and ongoing dialogue with partner countries, CAFI finalised a comprehensive PES framework and management system designed to harmonise implementation, enhance transparency, and scale impact across its portfolio. PES, a financial mechanism that incentivises land users to adopt pre-identified sustainable land use practices, have been piloted since 2016 in eight CAFI-funded projects and now form a central component of projects funded in 2024.

PIREDD Plateaux: A New Project Piloting the CAFI Payment for Environment Services (PES) Approach in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The 2023-approved PIREDD Plateaux project in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) province of Mai-Ndombe stands out as a key project for piloting the CAFI PES approach and tools. Building on successes and lessons learned from prior World Bank and CAFI-funded projects, it focuses on rural economic development and environmental protection, promoting deforestation-free agriculture and sustainable livelihoods in four territories (Bolobo, Kwamouth, Mushie and Yumbi) that together hold 5.2 million hectares of forest.

The project seeks to:

- Protect 94.976 hectares of forests and reduce deforestation by 3.300 hectares per year, through the establishment of agroforestry, deforestation-free perennial crops, and natural regeneration.
- Pilot CAFI's performance-based Payments for Environmental Services to local populations for implementing the agreed sustainable land-use practices.
- Generate economic development from the production and commercialisation of sustainable charcoal, manioc and palm oil, benefitting over 20.000 direct beneficiaries.

This programme is part of the DRC National REDD+ Fund portfolio, and is led by the Government of the Mai-Ndombe province.

Other Developments in CAFI

In 2024, CAFI achieved significant progress in delivering measurable climate and development impacts across the Congo Basin. Through its portfolio of active projects, the initiative advanced efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, while simultaneously promoting sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction in rural communities. The focus on sustainable land use, forest conservation, and strengthened governance contributed to enhanced ecosystem resilience and biodiversity. Significant advancements include the establishment of the Private Sector Investment Facility, which was capitalised with USD 100 million to attract private sector investments aimed at promoting deforestation-free, inclusive, and sustainable economic activities in partner countries. This facility is intended to catalyse innovative financing mechanisms and strengthen public-private partnerships.

Furthermore, CAFI enhanced its monitoring and transparency efforts by launching the CAFI Metrics Hub - an interactive, spatially enabled dashboard that integrates project data to enable real-time tracking of progress against key indicators such as emission reductions, forest conservation, and community benefits. This platform fosters improved accountability and supports evidence-based decision-making throughout the initiative. Gender equality and social inclusion also remained central cross-cutting priorities in CAFI's 2024 programming. Projects increasingly incorporated targeted measures to empower women, youth, and marginalized groups, complemented by specific indicators and monitoring mechanisms to track inclusion and equity outcomes.