



**Speech of Mr Propser DODIKO,
Minister of Environment, Agriculture and Livestock, Burundi, President
of the COMIFAC Council of Ministers**

H.E. Excellencies, Minister Delegate in charge of Environment in the Democratic Republic of Congo;

Excellencies Dear Ministers; Excellencies

Dear Ambassadors;

The Commissioner in Charge of the Environment, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development Department

Dear Co-facilitators of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) Franco-Gabonese co-facilitation

Ladies and Gentlemen, all protocols duly respected; Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have come to the end of our more than three-days-long deliberations.

Aligning concerns and challenges right from the CBFP counsel of directors to the thematic sessions and the different side events which helped us fuel our strategic ideas for a better subregional organisation was a tedious and interesting exercise. I think we are in a constructive dynamism that should indeed steer the sub-region towards a strategic positioning as far as the visibility of Central Africa's sub-region is concerned and its alignment to continental and intercontinental level with other tropical basins is concerned.

We equally learned how innovations in scientific research can bring another dimension to the political decisions of our States through knowledge of our resources, their quantification in our economies and the estimated value of the sub-region's potential, which must be considered in various international negotiations.

Concerning recurrent matters on international climate change funding from which Central Africa isn't benefiting much, we noted that we ought to identify the problems, ask good questions and find better solutions. Which is what was done during our stay here in Kinshasa where suggestions were made in order to; draft a roadmap from Kinshasa to Bélem and beyond, mobilise necessary means for purposes of permanently working with all actors and getting the private sector more involved.

Far from the rhetoric, if we are to achieve our goals, we need to focus on the strategic guidelines that emerged from the work of this 20th Meeting of the Parties, which each entity will have to implement in its work programme.

Personally and as far as the COMIFAC countries which I hold the presidency in office are concerned, I am going to encourage this partnership with the CBFP so as to improve dialogue between all stakeholders for a genuine construction to enable the Congo Basin to benefit from substantial financial support equivalent to the ecosystem services rendered to the planet as a whole. I know that together we will make it.

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests;

There is an adage that “we borrowed the soils and resources from our ancestors and that we ought to bequeath it to our heirs” in this particular context, we want to youths to henceforth responsible for the governance of these resources. Action has to be taken now and I believe the youth and civil society declaration in support of their action is valid and we must support them. I am delighted with the commitments made by the youths with us and which sub-regional institutions such as ECCAS, COMIFAC, CCBC and sub-regional initiatives such as CBFP and CAFI have already made in line with this. I would personally like to suggest a change of paradigm by allowing youths to take the lead, while supporting them and appreciating the results, because they must take responsibility for their future now, mindful that we have already done our bit for decades.

Ladies and Gentlemen

COMIFAC member States face several challenges in conserving and managing this heritage, including increasingly organised and professional poaching, the expansion of slash-and-burn agriculture, uncontrolled transhumance, illegal logging, land-use conflicts, the preservation of peatlands in the Congo Basin, effects of climate change, zoonosis and insufficient financial resources, the emergence of socio-political unrest in several countries in the sub-region, leading to massive population movements, internally displaced persons and refugees, which more often than not negatively affect natural resources of the host areas, to name but a few, and very recently the consequences of the war in Ukraine, which have left us speechless with regard to certain necessities, and the paradoxical shortages of certain foodstuffs on the African continent, which will open the way to other management paradigms.

Today, there is need for change in practices to reinforce the important role played by forests in making a real contribution to the economic diversification of Central Africa, and COMIFAC Member States are not left out of the reforms that need to be made, politically,

institutionally, diplomatically and technically. In practice, a revision of the texts on sub-regional management organisations is ongoing, as are decisions linked to sustainable forest management such as the ban on timber exports in the form of logs, an appropriate incentive forest tax mechanism, measures to secure revenue linked to timber exports and measures concerning timber trade such as the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA-FLEGT), and the dialogue with China (a logical framework for the development of a project to accompany this dialogue has been designed).

In terms of perspectives, COMIFAC Member States are united and committed to strengthen their partnership with Europe, main buyer of its timber, in order to support the implementation of COMIFAC's convergence plan for the economic, social and equitable development of communities in the Congo Basin, as well as the new European Union regulations. At this point, I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of ATIBT and ITTO, which daily support the private sector in our sub-region and encourage them to become more involved in the goal we all seek to achieve.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Before closing my remarks, I would like to reiterate my encouragement to the Franco-Gabonese co-facilitators and the organisation committee for the success of this meeting while inviting them to take into account the observations and remarks with a view to improving the governance of the CBFP during their term of office, as there is not enough time left.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my gratitude to Her Excellency the Minister Delegate for the Environment and to the Congolese Government under the very strong leadership of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr Félix TSISEKEDI TCHILOMBO, for hosting this 20th CBFP MoP here in Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Long live International Cooperation

Long live COMIFAC and its Member

States, Long live the DRC

Thank you,