



# Central African Forest Commission

A regional dimension to the conservation  
and the sustainable management of forest ecosystems

## Declaration of commitment by COMIFAC member states to the forests of Central Africa and call for equitable financing and Fair Share

The Member States of Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), gathered ahead of the Tropical Forests Symposium in Berlin, declare the following:

**Given** the COMIFAC treaty and the priorities of its Convergence plan, as well as United Nations resolution 54/214;

**Considering** that Congo Basin forests play a crucial role in regulating the world's climate and are internationally recognized as the second-largest tropical forest lung of the planet;

**Considering** that the Congo Basin forests are a unique hub of global biodiversity;

**Considering** that the Congo Basin forests promote the well-being of local populations and / or indigenous people, and economic development;

**Recognizing** that regional land management dynamics, whose local socio-cultural roots run deep, have long served to maintain ecological, economic and food balances;

**Aware** that key sector policies such as agriculture, mining, forestry and nature conservation must be deployed based on an integrated vision of territorial development;

**Recognizing** the need to act promptly to stem the unbridled expansion of transhumance dynamics towards the forests of Equatorial Africa;

**Recognizing** the need to involve civil society, local communities and indigenous populations in all decision-making processes relating to sustainable management of the natural resources of the Congo Basin forests and their vicinity;

**Considering** inputs from CBFP partners and representatives of Central African countries formulated during the eighth CBFP Council meeting held from 10 to 11 December 2020 in Kinshasa.

**Aware of current challenges**, notably:

- increased deforestation worldwide in the last 10 years causing loss of tropical rainforest areas;
- degradation of savannah areas, accelerating desertification;
- the preservation of peatlands in the Congo Basin as carbon sinks;
- the negative impacts of climate change, poaching, zoonoses, illegal exploitation of wildlife and biodiversity at large;
- increased transhumance-related activity in fragile ecosystems on the fringes of the Congo Basin's northern forests;
- the entrance of sustainable development criteria and new players within the framework of globalized trade
- the looming prospect of having new non-tariff trade barriers imposed at the detriment of added value for forest resources
- the emergence of socio-political unrest in several countries in the sub-region causing mass population displacement, internally displaced people and refugees who often negatively impact natural resources in the host areas.

**We, the COMIFAC member countries, undertake to press on with the necessary efforts to preserve our tropical forests and conserve biodiversity, and call on the international community to effectively increase its technical, financial and diplomatic support based on a shared responsibility approach:**

**And in this regard, we undertake to:**

1. remain and be increasingly involved in global climate governance,
2. keep our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions under control;
3. sustainably manage the Congo Basin's peatlands;
4. work actively to restore forest landscapes as part of the Bonn Challenge and AFR 100(*African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative*);
5. Strengthen national agencies in charge of protected area management and case-based development of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP);
6. Maintain and strengthen regional cooperation and intersectoral coordination in the area of biodiversity conservation, by means of national and transboundary protected area management, without prejudice to State sovereignty;
7. Improve forest governance;
8. Get civil society, local communities and indigenous populations more involved in forest and wildlife management;
9. Establish a tax incentive system to promote sustainable management of exploited forests, stronger value-added chains and more advanced processing of timber and non-timber products, as appropriate;
10. Establish verification and traceability systems for forest products destined for both export and domestic markets;
11. Further promote the green economy by adopting public strategies that promote sustainable management of natural resources;
12. Mainstream land use and allocation management strategies into public development policies;
13. Develop initiatives geared towards integrating the "One Health" approach in public policies;
14. Promote payment systems or mechanisms for Ecosystem Services (PSE) and/or Preservation of Ecosystem Services (PPSE);
15. Step up advocacy efforts within international fora to finance conservation and sustainable management of the Congo Basin forests;
16. Establish compensation mechanisms to offset damage caused by wildlife animals to plantations of local populations and villages in the Congo Basin forests.
17. Establish a sub-regional, multidisciplinary platform on transhumance management.

**What the countries expect from the international community:**

1. Support the sustainable management of Congo Basin forests by implementing fair and equitable trade policies that promote forest products and thus encourage the Central African countries' efforts to preserve and sustainably manage their forest ecosystems;
2. Actively support the implementation of forest policies and build capacities to develop bankable projects and raise funds from various international donor agencies;
3. Ease access to international markets for processed wood products that are legally and sustainably sourced from Congo Basin forests;
4. Support capacity building for national senior officials in developing and maturing bankable projects that can be submitted to raise funds from various international donor agencies.
5. Support the operationalization of COMIFAC's gender strategy;

6. Allocate a share of climate finance that is proportionate to the Congo Basin's contribution to maintaining the planet's equilibrium as recognized by the Paris Agreement as compensation for the region's conservation and sustainable management efforts;

Such compensation would entail:

- Recognizing equity in the distribution of resources mobilized by climate finance to maintain the planet's equilibrium as determined by the Paris Agreement, considering the relative magnitude of the contributions of the Amazon, Congo Basin and Southeast Asian tropical basins respectively;
  - Honouring pledges of contributions announced during the establishment of the Green Climate Fund;
  - Financing instruments helping to develop and implement the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), should be better equipped and more accessible to Central African countries;
  - Continual fund raising geared specifically towards the implementation of commitments made by Congo Basin countries, notably within the framework of: (i) the Bonn Challenge, (ii) the N'Djamena Declaration and (iii) the CAFI initiative,
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  8. Mobilize more technical and financial support to develop integrating projects as part of the implementation of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan;
  9. Mobilize suitable technical and financial support to promote capacity building and the necessary technology transfer;
  10. Foreign and innovative sustainable development-oriented investments into industries like the renewable energy, advance processing of timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs), agricultural sectors;
  11. Better coordination and harmonization of technical and financial support in line with the Paris Declaration on development aid efficiency and improving their integration into public planning and programming mechanisms of beneficiary countries and regional organizations;
  12. Joint evaluation of REDD+ implementation in Central African countries, to support phase II of the investment process;
  13. A fair price in accordance with the Paris Declaration for our carbon credits derived from REDD+ programs/projects or net carbon sequestration;
  14. Better integration, in economic and trade relations, of challenges associated with conservation and sustainable management of the Congo Basin's natural resources;
  15. Contribute to financing of compensation mechanisms for victims of conservation of the Congo Basin's peatlands, protected areas, forest reserves;
  16. Contribute to financing of compensation mechanisms for victims of stray animals (wildlife) for the Congo Basin's production sectors and more specifically, to regulate man-wildlife conflict;
  17. Take State priorities into account in project development and implement rational use of finances granted, notably by reducing transaction costs and hence promoting truly sustainable local development.

**Done in Yaounde on 26 August 2021**

For the COMIFAC member States

The Current Chairman

(signed) Jules Doret NDONGO

Minister of Forestry and Wildlife

Republic of Cameroon