

**Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP)  
The France-Gabon Co Facilitation of the CBFP (2023-2025)**

**Strategic axis Promoting dialogue and scientific and academic cooperation on the forests of the Congo Basin**

**Working document:** Orientation note for the scientific and academic networks and initiatives of the CBFP's Scientific and Academic College. prepared by the CBFP's Franco-Gabonese Co-Facilitation with a view to the first dialogue between the Donors' College and the CBFP's Scientific and Academic College (SAC), held on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Strategic/Priority axis 1 of the Roadmap of the Co-Facilitation of the French and Gabonese Republics of the CBFP consists of promoting dialogue and scientific and academic cooperation on the forests of the Congo Basin. With reference to the results of the One Forest Vision resulting from the One Forest Summit in Libreville in March 2023 and therefore of the "One Forest Vision Initiative", the Franco-Gabonese CBFP Facilitation will ensure the implementation of the strategic/priority axis of its Roadmap through the CBFP Scientific and Academic College (SAC). To this end, the SAC will be supported in implementing the activities identified below:

- Promote the visibility of the SAC and Central Africa's research and academic networks at international and regional events: e.g. IUFRO, RdP20, etc.
- Identification of the roles and responsibilities of the SAC and the networks for a shared approach to an intervention framework; to create synergies and mutualisation's between the various CBFP member networks and potential members of the CBFP and thus to reaffirm the role of the college in the science-policy interface.
- Developing scientific, social, environmental and economic knowledge on the state of forests and Donors and Partners Mapping (in close collaboration with OFAC)
- Enhance the value of scientific data for the benefit of sustainable forest management policies. On an annual basis, organise an online scientific popularisation event with two event formats: those with scientists and those with decision-making partners (government, civil society).
- Promote a cross-sectoral cooperation approach with the other CBFP colleges, by integrating the scientific college into other thematic workshops.

**CBFP Scientific and Academic**

**1. Co-Chairs. Leaders of the CBFP Scientific and Academic College (SAC)**

Prof Damase Khasa, Uni Laval, Canada, [Damase.Khasa@ibis.ulaval.ca](mailto:Damase.Khasa@ibis.ulaval.ca)

Prof. Professor KOUBOUANA Félix, Regional Coordinator of RIFFEAC, [koubouanafelix@gmail.com](mailto:koubouanafelix@gmail.com)

**2. Members of the CBFP Scientific and Academic**

The SAC has 27 members: <https://pfbc-cbfp.org/files/docs/Gouvernance/CBFP%20Members%20Mars-%202024.pdf>

**3. Member networks/Initiatives and potential members of the Scientific college**

The CBFP's Scientific and Academic College (SAC) is made up of the member networks listed below. However, some of these networks are still in the process of joining the CBFP.

**3.1 RIFFEAC: The Network of Forestry and Environmental Training Institutions of Central Africa**

A union of twenty-three training institutions in countries of the Central African sub-region. RIFFEAC has a regional coordination office based in Yaoundé. RIFFEAC projects: GIZ project for institutional support to RIFFEAC; FARAFE project ( Training Employment); Support project for the development of in-service training in the forestry-wood sector in Central Africa (ADEFAC) - ATIBT; ITTO project (training module) and PEFOGRN-BC project (Uni Laval, Canada): For more information: <https://riffecac.org/institutions/> Contact Leadership : Prof. KOUBOUANA Félix, Regional Coordinator du RIFFEAC, [koubouanafelix@gmail.com](mailto:koubouanafelix@gmail.com)

### 3.2 (American) Academic Consortium for the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (ACCBFP) / Congo Basin Institute (CBI)

The ACCBFP is an initiative of members of the CBFP living in America. The initiative was launched during the American Facilitation of the CBFP. ACCBFP is a partnership of Drexel University, Laval University, University of California at Los Angeles, University of Maryland, University of New Orleans, University of Oregon, University of South Florida, and the University of Wisconsin – Madison. **Find out more...** <https://archive.pfbc-cbfp.org/university-consortium-en.html>

The Congo Basin Institute (CBI) is a joint initiative of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture and UCLA Read more: <https://www.cbi.ucla.edu/>, and was launched at the 15th Meeting of the Parties (MOP 15) in Yaoundé, Cameroon under the US Facilitation of the CBFP. By combining expertise in conservation, smallholder agriculture, remote sensing, and social science, CBI seeks to address the needs of local communities and nature in the Congo Basin. It focuses on research, capacity development, and science translation, and identifies and tests possible solutions to address forest conservation in the region. In addition to the founding institutions, it partners with researchers, organizations, and communities across the region.

Contact Leadership : Virginia Zaunbrecher, J.D. [zaunbrecher@ucla.edu](mailto:zaunbrecher@ucla.edu)

**3.3 "Three networks in (almost) one": R2FAC: Research network on the forests of central Africa; RESSAC: Applied research in ecology and social sciences in support of sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa (RESSAC); DYNAFAC - Improving forest management in Central Africa**

#### 3.3.1 R2FAC: Research network on the forests of central Africa - R2FAC

The R2FAC brings together institutions and independent researchers who contribute to the "Management and sustainable development of forest resources" and "Research and development" priorities of the Convergence Plan of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC). Find out more about R2FAC and its charter: <https://r2fac.org/> Following the first science and donor meeting on March 12, "a more general remark was to ask all donors to include in their contracts a clause on the storage and public disclosure of the data their projects collect and process. It would be simple to do, not very hard to control, and would be a good thing for everyone". Contact Leadership :Dr Guillaume Lescuyer : [guillaume.lescuyer@cirad.fr](mailto:guillaume.lescuyer@cirad.fr)

**3.3.2 RESSAC:** Applied research in ecology and social sciences in support of sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa (RESSAC)

RESSAC is an initiative of two CBFP members, CIFOR and ICRAF: The Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) will implement a programme to support applied ecological and social science research with a view to strengthening the impact of this research on the sustainable management of Central African forest ecosystems. Contact Leadership: Dr Robert Nasi [R.Nasi@cifor-icraf.org](mailto:R.Nasi@cifor-icraf.org) CEO CIFOR and Dr Richard Eba'a Atyi [R.Atyi@cifor-icraf.org](mailto:R.Atyi@cifor-icraf.org)

#### 3.3.3 DYNAFAC - Improving forest management in Central Africa

DYNAFAC is an initiative of several CBFP members. The DYNAFAC collective promotes the development of technical and scientific skills among stakeholders in the development and management of Central African forests. DYNAFAC also aims to improve the appropriation of research results by national forestry administrations, through the improvement of regulatory texts. DYNAFAC relies on the diversity of its research (ecology, silviculture, genetics, etc.), the exchange and sharing of acquired knowledge (training and communication), and the development of a network of public and private partners committed to the sustainable management of Central African production forests. DYNAFAC is a group of organizations involved in monitoring forest dynamics, based on a network of sites and permanent devices installed in the forests of Central Africa. The Collective: CIRAD (France); ULB, GxABT-ULiège (Belgium), IRAD, Univ. de Yaoundé I-ENS (Cameroon), IRET, USTM-INSAB (Gabon), Univ. Bangui (CAR), INERA, UNIKIS, Univ. Marien Ngouabi (DRC), IRF (Congo)

Find out more... <https://www.dynafac.org/fr> Contact: [benoit.jobbeduval@atibt.org](mailto:benoit.jobbeduval@atibt.org)

### 3.4 Congo Basin Science Initiatives (CBSI)

**Congo Basin Science Initiative (CBSI) is the 127th member of the CBFP.** CBSI is a large network of scientists, led by those from the region, seeking to increase investment to train a new generation of scientists and collect data that will transform understanding of the world's second largest tropical forest in order to inform policy. CBSI will: (i) develop the [CBSI Science and Capacity Plan](#), a community-agreed approach to strengthening the capacity of Congo Basin scientists and universities to lead world class research on the people, climate, forests and biodiversity of the Congo Basin; (ii) stimulate investments to train the next generation of Congo Basin scientists who will collect new data and lead the research, transforming our understanding of the region; (iii) ensure that the CBSI approach is aligned with the aspirations of science stakeholders for the region and is positioned to address knowledge gaps, critical threats and potential tipping points that emerge as synthesis reports are prepared by our sister initiative, the [Science Panel for the Congo Basin](#); (iv) communicate findings as an active member of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and as a participant in other key fora, informing a “development without destruction” approach.

For more information, visit <https://congo-basin-science.net> Contact co-chairs: Prof. Raphael Tshimanga (University of Kinshasa) [raphael.tshimanga@unikin.ac.cd](mailto:raphael.tshimanga@unikin.ac.cd) and Prof. Simon Lewis (University of Leeds) : [S.L.Lewis@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:S.L.Lewis@leeds.ac.uk); [info@congo-basin-science.net](mailto:info@congo-basin-science.net),

### 3.5 CEBioS - Capacities for Biodiversity and Sustainable Development / Congo Basin Centre of Excellence (UG-CBC) / Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA)

#### 3.5.1 CEBioS - Capacities for Biodiversity and Sustainable Development

Building capacities for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in partner countries of the Belgian Development Cooperation: CEBioS is a programme of the member of the CBFP (Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences). CEBioS intervenes at the interface between science, policy and development practice by touching upon governance, extension and conservation in the field, involvement by local scientists, authorities, civil society organisations and local communities, and valorisation of local and traditional knowledge. With the available funding by the Belgian Development Cooperation (DGD), and in cooperation with BELSPO (Science Policy administration) CEBioS caters for specific interventions with personal commitment and involvement by the partners, optimizing the best matchmaking between its mission, expertise and the demands and needs from its partners. CEBioS operates in a participative and multi-stakeholder approach through dedicated [calls](#) for projects, short term grants, and earmarked cooperation with institutional partners.

In March 2023, the CEBioS programme (based at Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences and funded by the Belgian development Cooperation) organised together with the host institute ‘Centre de surveillance de la biodiversité (CSB)’ of Kisangani (RD Congo) the 2nd International Conference on the biodiversity of the Congo Basin, with more than 15 nationalities present and more than 280 participants in Kisangani. The report of the conference can be consulted [here](https://cebios.naturalsciences.be/publications/conference-report/). (<https://cebios.naturalsciences.be/publications/conference-report/>)

“At the dawn of our new 5-year phase, from July 2024 to 2028, we are keen to keep you informed about the activities and calls of our various projects: the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI), Measuring, reporting and verification (MRV), the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) and Policy Support (CHM-POL), Synergies with other development partners and external projects (SYN), Monitoring Ecosystems and Protected Areas (MEP), Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA).” Find out more: <https://cebios.naturalsciences.be/about-us/> Contacts: [cebios@naturalsciences.be](mailto:cebios@naturalsciences.be); [ljanssens@naturalsciences.be](mailto:ljanssens@naturalsciences.be)

#### 3.5.2 UGent - Congo Basin Centre of Excellence (UG-CBC)

The UG-CBC is a partnership between several professors from Ghent University focusing on climate change, biogeochemistry, biodiversity and the carbon balance in Congo basin forests. They set up the first Eddy Covariance Flux Tower in the Congo Basin (CongoFlux), which is located in the Yangambi Man-and-the Biosphere reserve. Within and around the footprint of CongoFlux, UG-CBC set up a network of intensive and large-scale forest inventory plots where biogeochemical fluxes are monitored in detail. Data are also integrated in Land System Models that are being optimised for the Congo Basin forest. Contact: [pascal.boeckx@ugent.be](mailto:pascal.boeckx@ugent.be), [hans.verbeeck@ugent.be](mailto:hans.verbeeck@ugent.be), [marijn.bauters@ugent.be](mailto:marijn.bauters@ugent.be), [wannes.hubau@ugent.be](mailto:wannes.hubau@ugent.be)

### 3.5.3 Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA)

The RMCA receives funding from the Belgian Development Cooperation (DGD) and the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) to invest in the interface between state-of-the-art scientific research, education and capacity building in the Congo Basin (especially Democratic Republic of the Congo). Research mostly focuses on tropical forest carbon and biodiversity dynamics, from a multi-timescale perspective. Intra-annual dynamics are assessed through detailed microscopic monitoring of xylogenesis; annual and decadal-scale dynamics are assessed through repeated measurements of permanent inventory plots; century-scale dynamics are assessed through tree ring research; millennial-scale dynamics are assessed through palaeoecological research (radiocarbon dating and taxonomic identification of soil charcoal). **Education** activities are conducted in the surroundings of the Luki Man-And-the-Biosphere reserve (DR Congo), where primary and secondary schoolchildren (the actors of tomorrow) are systematically informed on ecosystem services. **Capacity building** is done through training of Congolese technicians, PhD and MSc students and postdocs. Merit-based training programs are hosted in the [Yangambi Wood biology laboratory](#), which is the first of its kind in Sub-Saharan Africa. Institutional capacity building is done through Joint PhD's between Congolese and Belgian universities, which ensures juxtaposition of promoters from the South and the North. The RMCA also invests in combating illegal (tropical) timber trade through a new Belgian center of expertise for forensic wood research ([ENFORCE](#)). The RMCA combines the know-how and the infrastructure for taxonomic identification of wood. The RMCA hosts a state-of-the-art microscopy park, a DART time-of-flight mass spectrometer and a xylarium with >80000 wood samples from >13000 species. RMCA's most important partners in DR Congo are: UGent (UG-CBC), UNIKIS, CSB, ERAIFT, INERA, UNESCO, WWF, TEXAF BILEMBO, Globe Consult and CIFOR. Contact: [wannes.hubau@africamuseum.be](mailto:wannes.hubau@africamuseum.be)

### 3.6 Central African Forest Observatory, OFAC

The Central African Forest Observatory (OFAC) is a specialised unit of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) which provides up-to-date and relevant data on the region's forests and ecosystems, with the aim of informing political decision-making and promoting better governance and sustainable management of natural resources. It thus provides all COMIFAC countries and their partners with essential tools for steering and sharing knowledge for better governance and sustainable management of forest ecosystems. OFAC is supported by the RIOFAC project, funded by the European Union. Florence Palla, [fpalla@observatoire-comifac.net](mailto:fpalla@observatoire-comifac.net) Find out more... <https://www.observatoire-comifac.net/?lang=en>

### 3.7 UNESCO: Building a Stronger Multilateralism around education and science

UNESCO stands on the frontline of international cooperation, sharing knowledge, data and expertise to strengthen global coordination in the field of education, the sciences, culture, communication and information, supporting its Member States in the face of current global challenges. UNESCO's strategic missions include two major axes of relevance to the CBFP's scientific and academic college: (1) Mobilizing education to transform life and (2) promoting science and technology in the service of humanity: <https://www.unesco.org/en> Science is the greatest collective endeavour. It contributes to ensuring a longer and healthier life, monitors our health, provides medicine to cure our diseases, alleviates aches and pains, helps us to provide water for our basic needs – including our food, provides energy and makes life more fun, including sports, music, entertainment and the latest communication technology. Last but not least, it nourishes our spirit : <https://en.unesco.org/themes/science-society> UNESCO category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO are a global network of institutions of excellence in the Organization's domains of competence. Given their expertise, these institutes and centres contribute to the implementation of UNESCO's strategic priorities, programmes, and global development agendas, through international and regional cooperation, research, knowledge production, policy advice, and capacity development: <https://en.unesco.org/international-networks/category-2-institutes>. The UNESCO category 2 centre ERAIFT – the Regional Post-Graduate Training School on Integrated Management of Tropical Forests and Lands – provides essential capacity development in support of the sustainable management of the Congo Basin's forests. UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves connect biodiversity conservation and research with sustainable local development, through initiatives such as the ongoing multi-partner project “Lifting the Yangambi Biosphere Reserve into a Climate-Biodiversity Centre of Excellence” financed by the Government of Belgium. Contact: UNESCO : [h.thulstrup@unesco.org](mailto:h.thulstrup@unesco.org)

## SAC - Potential CBFP members

### 1. Science Panel for the Congo Basin (SPCB)

The SPCB is in the process of joining the CBFP. The Application for CBFP membership will follow shortly. Inspired by the successes of the long-term, large-scale \$100 million Biosphere-Atmosphere Experiment in Amazonia (LBA) and the SDSN Amazon Science Panel, discussions to form the network drew on the significant experience of Central African experts and reflected a broad agreement on a series of research priorities. Participants in the network agreed on an inclusive definition of the term "Congo Basin", including the contiguous Central African rainforests, mangroves, peatlands, savannahs, rivers, lakes and other ecosystems in the region. The Science Panel for the Congo Basin (SPCB) is the first independent scientific group of its kind dedicated to the synthesis of existing knowledge on the state of the Congo Basin and its ecosystems, and the threats they face. Led by leading scientists from the region, the SPCB will undertake a comprehensive synthesis of available scientific knowledge on the Congo Basin, including the knowledge of indigenous peoples, to produce a high-quality independent assessment report to be presented at COP30. Read more... <https://sciencepanelforthecongoamazon.org/> Contact Leadership : Ms. Emma Torres (VP UNSDN) [emma.torres@unsdn.org](mailto:emma.torres@unsdn.org) Cecil Max Haverkamp (UNSDN) : [cecil.haverkamp@unsdsn.org](mailto:cecil.haverkamp@unsdsn.org)

### 2. The One Forest Vision, OFVi

The One Forest Vision initiative (OFVi) aims to provide scientific support to countries in tropical basins to preserve the environmental integrity of irretrievable biodiversity and carbon reservoirs in tropical forests and wetlands. This initiative will enable transparent monitoring of forest degradation, carbon stocks and tropical biodiversity, with the results available for consultation on a future platform. It has been prefigured by 6 major French research organisations (CEA, CIRAD, CNRS, INRAE, IRD, MNHN) and is being developed in co-construction with partner countries in order to strengthen their research institutions. A dedicated French budget of €15 million over 5 years has been made available for the Congo Basin. New information being updated: An OFVi workshop in Gabon in November 2023 made it possible to gather research needs on a national scale, but also pointed out that in addition to support and capacity building, research in Central Africa had very significant infrastructure needs, well beyond the budgets that can currently be mobilised with OFVi. A similar workshop is planned for the Congo and is currently being organised. Find out more... <https://oneplanetsummit.fr/les-coalitions-82/initiative-one-forest-vision-251> Contact : [camille.lacroux@inrae.fr](mailto:camille.lacroux@inrae.fr); [jean-francois.soussana@inrae.fr](mailto:jean-francois.soussana@inrae.fr), [alain.billand@cirad.fr](mailto:alain.billand@cirad.fr)

### 3. Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) Scientific Network

The CAFI Scientific Network is currently under development. Letters of Intent signed between CAFI and partner countries require up to date peer reviewed data to guide negotiations between CAFI and partner countries as well as for their successful implementation. There is therefore a need to better understand the different scientific datasets and related results on issues such as, for example, forest area cover (and changes), land use and land use change, drivers of change, forest carbon stocks (and changes), biodiversity and agricultural expansion in the Congo Basin forests, as well as socio-economic context and the impact of interventions. Different methodological approaches on the same issue may lead to different results (locally, nationally and regionally), which is challenging to understand for non-scientists and makes science-based policy-making difficult. As this may lead to questions or confusion on the accuracy of results and outputs of a given study (be that national or regional), the need has been identified to find a practical and nimble solution to create a constructive environment to explore such possible differences in results and reach a consensus understanding of them to support the policy-science interface in the CAFI countries partners.

The CAFI Scientific Network will strengthen the policy-science interface for CAFI countries partners and at the regional level. It will also inform strategic programmes that need to be underpinned by robust data and science such as the development (or engagement in) carbon markets and payments for ecosystem services (including biodiversity). Find out more... <https://www.cafi.org/cafi-board>

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