

CBFP Scientific College Meeting

26.05.2021

02:00pm – 03:00pm (Berlin time)

Digital Meeting on MS Teams

Participants:

Richard Eba´a Atyi (Co-Leader of College), Donald Iponga (Co-Leader of College), Christian Ruck (CBFP Facilitator), Dany Pokem, Claus-Michael Falkenberg, Robert Nasi, Guillaume Lescuyer, Benoit Mertens, Denis Depommier, Pierre Defourny, Sandrine Andong, Denis Sonwa, Virginia Zaunbrecher, Claude Kachaka, Marius Ekue, Aurelian Mbazibain, Vivian Rossi, Xiao Jianmin, Johannes Haas

Agenda

1. Introductory remarks (by College Co-Leaders)
2. Introductory remarks (by CBFP Facilitator Dr. Christian Ruck)
3. State of play on the CBFP declaration process (by experts Claus Falkenberg/Jean Marie Noiraud)
4. Any other business (by College Co-Leaders and members)
 - a. Short report on CAFI FAO Deforestation and Forest Degradation Drivers study by CBFP Technical Committee Representative Damase Khasa
 - b. Other college activities in 2021, e.g. State of the Forests of the Congo Basin Report
5. Closing remarks (by College Co-Leaders)

After the Co-Leader Richary Atyi welcomed all participants and introduced them to the agenda of the meeting, the floor was given to CBFP Facilitator Dr. Christian Ruck representing the German Facilitation to the partnership. The Facilitator gave a short overview of the activities the Facilitation has pursued since the last virtual meeting of the College. He stressed that the work on the Declaration supported by all members of the CBFP has continued since its official adoption at the CBFP Council Meeting in Kinshasa in December 2020. He also noted that the Facilitation is preparing for upcoming key conferences in multilateral environmental politics, such as the Conferences of Parties of UNFCCC on climate and of CBD on biodiversity. In this regard, the Facilitation is commissioning several thematic short-term studies on pertinent issues of forest and environmental politics, such as on REDD+ in the Congo Basin, on ecotourism, on sustainable value chains and on transhumance. Furthermore, he asked the Scientific College to help prepare the Facilitation and the Regional College of our Partnership for these upcoming conferences and preparatory negotiations. In particular, a numerical estimation of the Congo Basin´s “value” to safeguarding the global climate is needed to politically lobby for a more appropriate share of climate funding to be directed towards the Congo Basin rainforests. Thanks to the outstanding importance of the Congo Basin rainforest ecosystems for carbon sequestration and for other global and local ecosystem services, their crucial role for global climate mitigation and adaptation should be reflected more adequately also in financial terms. Reacting to a question from Pierre Defourny, Facilitator Dr. Ruck clarified that scientific evidence is needed to underscore political lobbying for the Congo Basin and make it more effective. Currently, the Facilitation is using the figure of 5% as demand for an appropriate share of all climate funding to be directed towards the Congo Basin rainforests. Additional input or other estimations are more than welcome.

Thereafter, Claus Michael Falkenberg introduced the College to ongoing work on the Declaration after it had been officially adopted by the CBFP Council in Kinshasa in December 2020. He clarified that the text has remained the same in principle and only minor adjustments have been made reacting to demands from the regional college, for example a formulation towards “zero deforestation” as objective instead of “no deforestation”. He also noted that – as had been agreed in Kinshasa – the Declaration has been sent to all

COMIFAC Ministers in order for a cross-sectoral revision of the document with different concerned Ministries in the COMIFAC countries. Claus Falkenberg also explained that the Declaration is planned to be signed by the COMIFAC Ministers to give it more political weight and that it is envisaged to integrate key points of the Declaration into the NDCs of all COMIFAC states which are being revised currently. Having said that, it was stressed that the Declaration gains political weight through its elaboration in a participatory consultative process including all CBFP Colleges prior to the last Council Meeting. This demonstrates that the Declaration is more than an additional declaration by states, but that it was instead elaborated and is supported by all stakeholder groups represented in CBFP Colleges. It is thus a “joint perspective of the Congo Basin” and can be used as basic documents for negotiations on additional funding and international support to the region in exchange for commitments and actions on forest conservation and sustainable use.

On the following agenda point, Prof. Damase Khasa introduced the College to the status quo of a CAFI-funded and FAO-executed regional study on drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in the Congo Basin. Prof. Khasa is representing the CBFP Scientific College in the technical committee of this study. The presentation is attached. It was discussed how the mentioned study is overlapping with comparable regional studies, e.g. a recent study by OFAC and Vancutsem et al. (2021). The discussion in the College clarified that there are some overlaps but that when FAO and CAFI designed the current study project, the recent papers had not been published yet. Furthermore, different perspectives on the same question can be very helpful. Also, one focus of the project is to specifically use open-access sources such as SEPAL, to improve the methodology of deforestation monitoring and to make this methodology available to partner countries so they can reproduce studies and ideally create a feeling of ownership. Results will be shared in early 2022 in the form of a white paper as well as by means of several peer reviewed articles.

Co-Leader Richard Atyi then informed the College that the regional “State of the Forests of the Congo Basin” study is being finalized and that it is planned to publish the report by the end of 2021. He underlined that this regular effort is carried mainly by voluntary contributions of numerous scientists working on Congo Basin forest issues.

Concerning any other business, the University of Louvain will be hosting a large conference on land use issues in 2022 while the Global Landscapes Forum on drylands in Africa will take place online already beginning of June 2021.

In the closing remarks by the Facilitator Dr. Ruck and Co-Leader Richard Atyi, the College was also informed that the German Facilitation to the CBFP has been extended until the end of the year 2022. The Facilitator thanked the College for all provided support and encouraged the group to jointly keep pursuing the fight for conservation and sustainable use of the Congo Basin’s rainforests.

