



*Thursday 10 December 2020, afternoon*

**Minutes of High-Level Political Dialogue between members of the CBFP Regional and the members of the Donor College**

**Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo – 10 December 2020:** A High-level dialogue was held between the members of the CBFP Regional College (member States, COMIFAC and ECCAS) and the Technical and Financial partners who belong to the CBFP Donor College.

The High-Level Political Dialogue was chaired by the Honourable Dr Christian Ruck, CBFP Facilitator of the Federal Republic of Germany, and co-Chaired by His Excellency Mr. Jules Doret Ndongo, Cameroon Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, Acting President of COMIFAC. Other members of the bureau of the High-Level Dialogue included His Excellency Maître Claude NYAMUGABO BAZIBUHE, Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, host country of the meeting.

Participants in the High-Level Political Dialogue included H.E. Ms. Rosalie Matondo, Minister of Forest Economy of the Congo and Acting President of OCFSA, H.E Mr. Amit IDRIS, Minister of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fishing, of the Central African Republic, His Excellency Prof. Lee White, Minister of Water, Forests, Sea and Environment in charge of Gabon's Climate plan (participation online). The President of ECCAS was represented by Dr Honoré Tabuna, ECCAS Commissioner for the Environment, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development. The COMIFAC Executive Secretariat was represented by its Executive Secretary, Mr. Raymond Ndomba Ngoye, before the Members of the Regional College.

On the part of the Donors College, the Representatives of the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium, the United States of America, France, Norway and the European Union participated actively.

The Ministers and the financial partners were assisted respectively by representatives of diplomatic missions, COMIFAC National Coordinators, and Representatives of regional organizations and institutions and thematic experts from the ECCAS / COMIFAC countries.

Mr Maxime Nzita Nganga, Head of the ECOFAC 6 Regional Mission Program for Central Africa, moderated the discussions between the parties.

The main aim of the session was to allow partners to exchange views on the ways and means of improving their collaboration, especially in identifying and scheduling ongoing efforts to improve the management, conservation and valuing of the Congo Basin forests.

Following a string of speeches delivered by CBFP representatives, Germany, ECCAS, COMIFAC, ECCAS, and the DRC Minister of the Environment and Forests during the opening session of the High-Level Dialogue, presentations were made by partners who were taking part online: two short introductory presentations by CIFOR and OFAC provided an update on the state of fund raising for the conservation of Congo Basin forests and their vicinity over a dozen years. It was noted that close to 2 billion US dollars have been earmarked for a host of national and multinational projects and programs, including nearly 53% in the framework of bilateral cooperation (USD 890 M) and a little more than 47% as part of multilateral cooperation (USD 806 M) between 2008 and 2017.

The resources are primarily meant to fund the implementation of forest policies and biodiversity preservation. Yet, it has been found that the Congo Basin generally receives less financial support than the Amazon Basin or the forests of South East Asia. Several explanations have been put forward, a common one being that land use planning and zoning must be carried out in order to attract funding based on robust land use and strategic frameworks; Likewise, another oft-cited challenge is the lack of capacity for developing and maturing bankable projects to be submitted for funding by international donor agencies, the lack of political commitment to forestry and conservation strategies, in addition to numerous challenges arising from the state of governance, population growth and poverty, lack of infrastructure, and problems of socio-political instability.

The suggestion is to raise the political profile of forests and the environment, to make them a central concern in improving strategies, and also raise the profile of professionals who are tasked with negotiating, mobilizing and implementing funding for forest and biodiversity conservation.

Several financing partners who are members of the CBFP took turns on the podium to reaffirm their commitment to the Congo Basin forests. Thus, the EU, Germany, France, Norway, the USA and Belgium, through their high-level representatives, recalled their long-standing commitments, citing major programs and projects financed and / or in progress in Central Africa. The statements of the donor countries are hereby attached.

In summarizing the draft Joint Declaration, there is a need to emphasize the principle of payment for environmental services to the States that manage this heritage of humanity, the second largest tropical forest lung in the world. The international community needs to lend its support for this heritage be preserved. Thus, the efforts of States to preserve forests and conserve biodiversity, must be matched by a commitment of donors to contribute financially and even in greater amounts than in the past, to ensure that these objectives are achieved. The ECCAS / COMIFAC States want a fair share of climate finance to be effectively allocated to the sub-region, and that the support should also contribute to the economic and social development of forest and their vicinity, including transhumance, whose growth is placing increasing pressure on the entire northern edge of the Congo Basin forests.

The draft Joint Declaration addresses many strategic points and will need to be further refined with the help of the CBFP Facilitation so that true consensus can be achieved between States and Donors, particularly regarding their level of mutual commitment. The declaration could thus be signed soon in order to be presented at major international meetings on the Climate, Forests and Biodiversity, scheduled for 2021. The challenge is to quickly mobilize new financing for the Congo Basin under conditions which increase the absorption capacities of

States and their implementing partners for forest preservation, forest conservation, biodiversity, and the fight against climate change.

The following are the main conclusions of the high-level exchanges between the Donors and Ministers:

1. A common desire of the parties for more demonstrations of the States' commitment to sustainable forest management, biodiversity, and a low-carbon economic model through sustainable forest management,
2. A firm commitment of the parties to support the implementation of the German CBFP Facilitation roadmap;
3. Increased consultation on the common positions of Central Africa with donors regarding international conventions and agreements, especially those on Biodiversity and Climate;
4. Taking into account the balancing and equitable distribution of financing flows between the three tropical forest basins of the planet;
5. A commitment of the donors to support the States in building institutional and organizational capacities to ease access to climate finance, especially the Green Climate Fund and others (Finance Ready)
6. Enhancing the indicators of tangibility of benefits and socioeconomic impacts in various projects of the States and Donors - thus ensuring that partner support falls in line with priorities identified at the national level in the countries concerned and at the sub-regional level as well;
7. Strengthening the institutional appropriation mechanisms of beneficiary countries in implementing joint programs - providing the appropriate management resources for identifying, formulating and deploying the projects concerned;
8. Clarifying the roles of actors in the implementation of programs derived from cooperation between the States and bilateral and multilateral Donors;
9. A common commitment to human rights issues as part of their monitoring and joint evaluation **in order to avoid unilateral decisions on the part of donors.**
10. A commitment to the need to support the States with logistical and operational monitoring in order to better control illegal logging, especially that which is intended to supply national urban markets and cross-border traffic into neighbouring countries.
11. A commitment to strengthen the capacities of national administrations and forest provinces for monitoring and land use management activities in the permanent forest and non-permanent forest domain, in line with the provisions of national, regional and local land use plans.