

CBFP celebrates its 20th anniversary

Final Communiqué of the 19th Meeting of Parties of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership from 5-8 July 2022
Libreville, Gabon

Member parties to the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) met in Libreville, Gabonese Republic, from 5 to 8 July 2022 for their 19th meeting and celebrated the 20th anniversary of their Partnership.

The Parties warmly thank His Excellency **Mr. Ali BONGO ONDIMBA**, President of the Gabonese Republic, Head of State, the authorities and the people of Gabon, and His Excellency **Prof. Lee WHITE**, Minister of Water, Forestry, Sea and Environment charged with the Climate and Land Use Plan of Gabon, for their hospitality and for their contributions to the success of this meeting.

The 19th Meeting of Parties of the CBFP brought together about 600 participants representing Central African countries, donor countries, international organisations, NGOs, civil society, representatives of research institutions and representatives of the private sector.

The 19th Meeting of Parties of the CBFP is organized with the financial support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by GIZ.

The opening session of the streams was marked by 5 speeches, namely:

- The welcome address by the **Honourable Dr. Christian RUCK**, CBFP Facilitator of the Federal Republic of Germany
- The speech by **His Excellency Dr. Honoré TABUNA**, Commissioner for the Environment, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development of the ECCAS Commission
- The speech by **His Excellency Mr. Jules Doret NDONGO**, Minister of Forests and Wildlife of Cameroon, current President of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC)
- The opening speech of Gabon by **His Excellency Michel Stéphane BONDA**, Minister Delegate of Water, Forest, Sea and Environment in charge of the Climate and Land Use Plan, Gabon.

Dr. Richard EBA'A ATYI, CIFOR-ICRAF Regional Director for Central Africa, introduced the debates of the 19th Meeting of Parties with a presentation on the issues, challenges and prospects for the future of the Congo Basin forests.

This 19th Meeting of Parties of the CBFP was co-chaired by His Excellency Dr. Christian RUCK, Goodwill Ambassador, Facilitator of the Federal Republic of Germany for the CBFP and His Excellency Jules Doret NDONGO, Minister of Forests and Wildlife of Cameroon, current President of COMIFAC. At their side was further His Excellency Prof. Lee WHITE of

Gabon.

The High Level Political Dialogue between donor representatives of CBFP as signatories to the CoP 26 Congo Basin Joint Donor Statement and Central African Ministers as members of ECCAS/COMIFAC was co-chaired by His Excellency Mr. Jules Doret NDONGO and the Right Honourable Lord GOLDSMITH OF RICHMOND PARK, Minister for the Pacific and the Environment at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), President of the CoP 26. The partners present confirmed their commitment to support the Congo Basin in its efforts to conserve forests and biodiversity. Some partners are considering increasing their contributions.

The main outcomes of the 19th Meeting of the Parties of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership were as follows:

- After the Cop 26 in Glasgow and COMIFAC's and CBFP's joint efforts, the Parties have noted considerable progress regarding the international visibility of the importance of Central African forests and their ecosystem services for the whole of Africa and the world. The CBFP Parties insist on the importance of pursuing, in an accelerated manner, the implementation of the commitments of the *Declaration of commitment by COMIFAC member states to the forests of Central Africa and call for equitable financing and Fair Share* announced in Berlin by the ECCAS/COMIFAC countries in September 2021 and confirmed in Glasgow at COP 26.
- The Parties welcomed the successful conduct of the High-Level Political Dialogue, allowing them to obtain more details on the financial commitments made in Glasgow for the COMIFAC member countries as part of the *CoP26 Congo Basin Joint Donor Statement* (USD 1.5 billion) and to discuss the arrangements and financial mechanisms that would facilitate better coordination and greater efficacy of funding, contributions and interventions in Central Africa;
- The Parties propose the creation of a " Task Force " responsible for developing modalities and procedures to ensure improved governance and the disbursement of payments for ecological services;
- The parties propose to intensify the institutional dialogue on the establishment of appropriate instruments for payment of ecosystem services such as those associated with carbon sequestration, biodiversity and the water cycle; and that the necessary technical and financial solutions be developed for this, in particular for protected areas;
- With regard to transhumance, the Parties congratulate ECCAS for having agreed to provide institutional and organisational support for the implementation of the N'Djamena Declaration, in close collaboration with the ECOWAS and IGAD sub-regional organisations. The Parties welcome the proposal by the German Facilitation to organise a "N'Djamena 2" conference together with ECCAS and in collaboration with its funding partners.
- The Parties congratulate Germany for its commitment to finance a regional project on the management of transhumance between the Sahel and the Congo Basin; and the European Union for having included a section on transhumance in its new Naturafrica programme. Synergy and collaboration in the pooling of resources is recommended. The Parties encourage the technical and financial partners to contribute to the preparation of priority investment programmes on transhumance in the context of preparing N'Djamena

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- The Parties welcome the conducting of the CTSA/CBSA Council of Ministers in the context of the implementation of the Cameroon-CAR-Chad cross-border agreements and encourage the finalisation of the cross-border agreements currently under negotiation in the geographical blocks for the follow-up of the implementation of the N'Djamena Declaration.
- The Parties urge the financial mechanisms, funds, programmes and projects of CBFP members to make use of existing expertise and skills within COMIFAC in the implementation of their operations. This is to ensure better regional ownership and systematically seize opportunities for structured dialogue and exchange within the CBFP, which is experiencing growth.
- The Parties expressed their satisfaction and appreciation for the achievements of the Federal Republic of Germany's CBFP Facilitation, which will end in December 2022, and welcomed the fact that the Federal Republic of Germany confirms its commitment to remain a committed and active member of the CBFP with new funding pledges for Central Africa.
- The Parties welcome the United States of America for launching the fourth phase of the CARPE programme in Central Africa.
- The Parties welcomed The French Republic for agreeing to take over the CBFP Facilitation, and were grateful to the Federal Republic of Germany for their continued support for the first half of 2023 to enable a successful handover of the CBFP Facilitation by France.
- The Parties called for continued efforts to promote the following objectives:
 1. Prepare Central Africa's contributions to ensure progress in the forthcoming international negotiations on climate change and biodiversity conservation, with specific proposals for donors on financial support and long-term subsidies for the sustainable management of forests and forest landscapes by structuring the available funding; and for COMIFAC countries on the effective and transparent use of the funds made available, and the physical and legal security of medium- and long-term investments in the landscapes
 2. Accelerate the implementation of the *Declaration of commitment by COMIFAC member states to the forests of Central Africa and call for equitable financing and Fair Share*, and the *CoP 26 Congo Basin Joint Donor Statement of Glasgow* for better forest governance and access to a fair percentage of climate and biodiversity funding.
 3. Cooperate closely with other key sectors of the rural economy beyond forestry and the environment such as agriculture, livestock, mining, oil and gas, infrastructure, energy and social sectors.
 4. Promote enhanced engagement of the partnership with private sector entities and dialogue with China for a clean tropical timber trade.

The thematic streams produced a number of recommendations on key issues related to the protection and sustainable management of Congo Basin forests, protected areas and restoration of degraded landscapes. They also provided a number of other valuable documents and tools for CBFP partners. The details of the recommendations are contained in the attached annexes and below is a summary of their main points:

Stream 1a Prerequisites for effective and sustainable land-use planning

Spatial planning is seen by several global conventions as a basic tool to realize sustainable development objectives. To achieve this, harmonisation of spatial planning concepts and practice between actors is necessary. It is recommended to:

- A. Create formalised spaces for dialogue and coordination of spatial planning** to identify, review and revitalise the frameworks for consultation in this area at local, provincial, national and regional level; and to take stock of their missions and effectiveness in meeting the requirements of sustainable development, decentralisation and inclusive multi-sectoral representation.

- B. Delineate and secure rural areas** to guarantee their sustainability through models of governance and land tenure security adapted to each type of activity and stakeholder (state, private sector, communities, vulnerable groups). These models must recognise, secure and ensure the inclusive management of overlapping rights.

- C. Prioritise and incentivise the protection of high value forests. Todo so, it is recommended to:**
 - 1. Develop a common definition of high value forests in cultural, socio-economic, biodiversity and carbon terms, through participatory processes, in order to integrate these areas into land use and allocation plans and policies.
 - 2. Prioritise the sustainability of high value forests by ensuring equitable burden and benefit sharing between local, national and international stakeholders, including through appropriate, transparent and sustainable financing mechanisms, such as PES and carbon finance.
 - 3. When net losses of high-value forests cannot be avoided, develop standards for assessing the impacts of structuring public and private investments and develop appropriate environmental and social compensation mechanisms.

Stream 1b Conditions and perspectives for a sustainable timber economy

- A. Concerning the continuous improvement of forest management :**
 - 1. Ensure a sustainable balance between the availability of the wood resource and the installed industrial and artisanal primary processing capacity.
 - 2. Adopt a landscape, multi-use and inclusive approach in the framework of second rotation management plans.

- B. Concerning the improvement of the image and reputation of forest governance in Central Africa**
 - 1. Support the operationalisation of national digital traceability and legality verification systems and facilitate bridges between private and public systems.

2. Encourage and promote forest certification for legality and sustainability.
3. Support countries in setting up economic intelligence units to manage the sustainable development of the timber sector and anticipate market developments.

C. Concerning the strengthening of social forestry and the reduction of demographic pressure

4. Promote communal forests and collaboration between concessionaires and decentralised territorial entities within the framework of concerted management of landscapes and forest massifs and the different statuses of forests under concession, conservation, communal or community forests.

D. Concerning the improvement of forest resource development and the supply of legal wood to the domestic market

5. Apply ECCAS Decision N°29 and N°30 of 2015 to promote the supply of legal timber to domestic and regional markets, with exemption from VAT and customs duties for timber destined for domestic and intra-community markets
6. Integrate into public procurement regulations the obligation to purchase legal timber
7. Provide a stable regulatory and fiscal framework to attract investment in wood processing for SMEs.
8. Strengthen the capacity of stakeholders through the development of vocational training.
9. Promote products made from diversification species, including bamboo.

Stream 2 Biodiversity: The Future of Protected Areas

A. In terms of aligning the size of conservation areas with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) target of 30% of land surface conversion into conservation areas by 2030, COMIFAC member states are invited to:

1. increase funding, improve management, identify other effective conservation measures by zones (OECM), and focus scarce resources on smaller areas to improve the management effectiveness of protected areas.

B. With regard to effective management models and sustainable financing of protected areas in Central Africa, COMIFAC member states are invited to:

2. adapt management models according to their needs and specificities and seek innovative models to capitalise, recognise and integrate local natural resource governance structures into decision-making and sustainable development

C. Concerning institutional capacity building, COMIFAC member states are invited to:

3. create a sub-regional centre of excellence in the field of biodiversity in Central Africa's forests, bringing together all the best practices and capitalising on regional experience in the management of protected areas

D. With regard to the development of eco-tourism in the protected areas of Central Africa, COMIFAC member states are encouraged to rapidly develop the various tourism segments within the multiple ecosystems of Central Africa by:

4. improving the business climate in the tourism sector, in particular by granting of electronic tourist visas and the strengthening of road and air access infrastructures to protected areas
5. creating a sub-regional ecotourism quality label and secure investments.
6. facilitating cross-border tourism circuits.

E. Concerning community development and the respect of human rights in and around protected areas in order to allow for better integration of protected areas into their economic and social environment and to limit the emergence of conflicts between actors, riparian populations and wildlife, COMIFAC Member States are encouraged to:

7. put the human dimension at the centre of conservation, including in the demographic outlook, and put in place a verification mechanism that allows for the observation, by mutual agreement, of possible allegations of human rights violations and to decide jointly (Donor, State and other accused actors) on corrective measures.

Stream 3 recommendations in the context of "Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR): Opportunities and Challenges in Central Africa", the parties are invited to:

1. Define and implement a regulatory and jurisdictional FLR framework and strategy, including land tenure with property and land use rights, as a prerequisite for implementing FLR. This should be based on a clear national definition of what this approach entails, building on existing regional platforms and initiatives such as AFR100 and the Bonn Challenge to define a framework and scale up progress.
2. Adopt participatory and bottom-up approaches that include local communities, based on a "collective vision", participatory land-use planning and local consultation platforms involving all stakeholders
3. Strengthen the integration of sustainable agricultural practices into the FLR approach to strengthen the food security aspect and design business models based on value chain development.
4. Improve access to finance for FLR through the development of long-term financial mechanisms: build on existing partnerships to improve access to finance and implement progress
5. Harness the potential for restoration around protected areas to reduce pressure on remaining high conservation value areas
6. Ensure continued knowledge sharing and capacity building on FLR at all levels and continued integration of supporting research results into practice.

The 19th Meeting of Parties of the CBFP started with a technical segment, consisting of four thematic streams. This was followed by a first political segment, including meetings of the CBFP colleges and the tenth meeting of the CBFP Governing Council.

A high-level political dialogue was held between high-level representatives of the *CoP26 Congo Basin Joint Donor Statement*/CBFP donor countries and the ministers of Central African countries as members of ECCAS/COMIFAC.

Germany, through its State Secretary for Development, Mr. Jochen Flasbarth, declared a new commitment of 45 million Euros for the conservation of Central African forests.

Concerning the organisation of the work of the streams, the Parties congratulate and thank the leaders and co-leaders of the CBFP MOP 19 thematic streams, namely CAFI for Stream 1a; Gabon and ATIBT for Stream 1b, COMIFAC, AWF/WCS for Stream 2; CIFOR/IRT and GIZ for Stream 3. These thanks extend to the resource persons for the thematic streams.

Concerning the governance of the CBFP, the Parties thank the co-leaders of the outgoing colleges for their efforts to ensure proper functioning of their colleges, namely CIFOR/IRET; Earth Worm Foundation and ROSCEVAC. The Parties warmly congratulate the new Co-leaders of the following CBFP colleges: Laval University and RIFFEAC for the scientific college, the United Kingdom for the donors' college, REFACOF with RECEIAC as alternate for the civil society college, Volcanoes Safaris with Olam as alternate for the private sector college. The parties wish every success to the new co-leaders of the colleges mentioned and new members of the CBFP Governing Council.

The parties are pleased to welcome the following partners to the CBFP: Universität Göttingen - Afropolis; Universität Frankfurt - ZIAF, the Kingdom of Sweden, IFED - Canada and the Republic of Angola.

The meeting of the parties was the occasion to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the CBFP during a special cocktail dinner. It was also an opportunity to celebrate 20 years of the Gabon National Parks Network and 30 years of the ECOFAC programme.

The inaugural session of the "General Assembly" plenary and solemn opening ceremony of the 19th CBFP plenary meeting was enhanced by the active participation of several high-level political leaders, namely:

- **His Excellency Dr. Honoré TABUNA**, Commissioner for Environment, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development of the ECCAS Commission
- **Her Excellency Ms Chrysoula ZACHAROPOULOU**, Secretary of State for Development, Francophonie and International Partnerships
- **The Honourable Dr. Christian RUCK**, COMIFAC Goodwill Ambassador and CBFP Facilitator for the Federal Republic of Germany
- **His Excellency Prof. Lee WHITE**, Minister of Water, Forestry, Sea and Environment in charge of the Climate Plan and Land Use Plan, Gabon
- **Rt Hon Lord GOLDSMITH OF RICHMOND PARK**, Minister for the Pacific and the Environment at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), UK.
- **His Excellency Jochen FLASBARTH**, State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ, Germany
- **His Excellency Jules Doret NDONGO**, Minister of forestry and wildlife of Cameroon, current President of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC)
- **His Excellency Michael MOUSSA-ADAMOU**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Gabon

The session on the report of the German Facilitation, the stakes and perspectives was moderated by Dr. Hervé-Martial MAIDOU, Executive Secretary of COMIFAC. The CBFP Facilitator, Honorable Dr. Christian RUCK, presented his report and Mr. Philippe LACOSTE, Director of Sustainable Development, France, presented the challenges and perspectives for the French CBFP Facilitation.

A high-level declaration session of the CBFP MOP 19 financial partners, moderated by Dr. Dany POKEM was marked by three high-level declarative interventions, namely:

- **Her Excellency Mrs. Rosario BENTO** Ambassador of the European Union to Gabon
- **Mr. Gilles KLEITZ**, Executive Director of AFD
- **His Excellency Hans BRATTSKAR**, Special Climate Envoy, Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative NICFI

The regional coordinators of REPALÉAC and RIFFEAC delivered messages to the Plenary on the *COP26 IPLC Forest Tenure Joint Donor Statement (1,7 billion \$ US)* and on the awards granted by the Democratic Republic of Congo to RIFFEAC and Laval University.

The restitution session of the streams was moderated by **Minister Raymond MBITIKON, CBFP Co-Facilitator of the Federal Republic of Germany.**

A high-level political closing panel of CBFP MOP 19 was moderated by **Dr. Philippe MAYAUX**, Team Leader Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, DG-INTPA, European Commission, on "Perspectives and next steps from Libreville: Where do we go from here?" The speakers were :

- **His Excellency Mr. Jules Doret NDONGO**, Minister of Forestry and Wildlife of Cameroon, current President of the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC)
- **His Excellency Mr. Jochen FLASBARTH**, State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ, Germany
- **Mr. Philippe LACOSTE**, Director of Sustainable Development, France
- **The Honourable Jean-Jacques ZAM**, Regional Coordinator of REPAR-Central Africa
- **Dr. Richard EBA'A ATYI** CIFOR Central Africa Regional Coordinator
- **Ms Marie TAMOIFO**, Regional Coordinator of REJEFAC

The 19th Meeting of Parties ended with a closing ceremony chaired by His Excellency Michael MOUSSA_ADAMOU, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Gabon.

An exhibition centre with **a dozen stands** and **around fifty** related parallel events were also organised for all present audiences.

Written in Libreville (Gabon), 8 July 2022

The participants