



Congo Basin Forest Partnership

11th Meeting of the Governing Council of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP)

Report by the CBFP Facilitator of the Federal Republic of Germany

Dr. Christian Ruck

For the members of the Governing Council

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Having reached the end of my mandate as Facilitator of the Federal Republic of Germany for the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), it is with great pleasure that I, in my capacity as outgoing Facilitator, take the opportunity at this 11th Meeting of the Governing Council of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) to take the floor and present to the members of the said Council a brief summary of the activities carried out to date by the CBFP Facilitation of the Federal Republic of Germany.

After handing over the CBFP Facilitation from Belgium to Germany under the chairmanship of His Excellency Mr **Jules Doret NDONGO**, Cameroonian Minister of Forestry and Wildlife and then President of COMIFAC, in December 2019 in Douala, Cameroon, I was installed as Facilitator in Berlin in February 2020 during a solemn ceremony presided over by **Dr Gerd Müller, then German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development**.

After consulting all partners, a facilitation roadmap that aligned with the COMIFAC Convergence Plan and the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals was drawn up and adopted. This roadmap was subsequently harmonised with that of the then President of COMIFAC.

Various actions have been carried out to implement this roadmap over the past three and a half years, and I would like to take the opportunity of this **11th meeting of the CBFP Governing Council** to provide some information on the main activities:

- 1. To improve the profile of the Congo Basin, the facilitation has succeeded in facilitating agreement on a common vision within the partnership**, which has made it possible to influence international negotiations in its favour. This was done as part of the **preparation for Central Africa's participation in major international events**. The main product of this work was the ***Declaration of commitment by COMIFAC member states to the forests of Central Africa and call for equitable financing and fair share***, also known as the ***Fair Deal***; all partners and the CBFP colleges contributed to the drafting of this important declaration. Following its adoption by the ministers of the COMIFAC member states, the Declaration was presented in Berlin during the Congo Basin Forest Day on 7 September 2021 on the margin of the Tropical Forest Symposium, co-organised by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) under the chairmanship of **Dr Gerd Müller**. **A bi-party Aide-Mémoire** was co-signed by then Minister Gerd Müller and then President of COMIFAC and included the appointment of the CBFP Facilitator, the Hon Dr Christian Ruck, as **COMIFAC Goodwill Ambassador**.

The Declaration reflects the commitment of all Central African countries to speak with one voice. With this Declaration, Central Africa now has an important tool with which to negotiate with the international community. In addition, based on the vision of the declaration and specialized literature, the Facilitation has developed a political narrative which has served to underpin the aims of the declaration and promote the *Fair Deal* at the political level. The tone has since been set in favour of the forests of the Congo Basin at recent major international events, including the World Conservation Congress in Marseille, France, the 26th Conference of Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Glasgow, UK, UNFCCC COP27 in Sharma El Sheikh, Egypt, the World Forestry Congress in Seoul, South Korea, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) COP15

in Montreal, Canada, the "One Forest Summit" in Libreville, Gabon, and other regional and international summits.

The drafting of this Declaration, which was facilitated by the CBFP, has already made it possible to achieve a **major and historic result** for the Central African sub-region, namely the *COP26 Congo Basin Joint Donor Statement* by which **a financial commitment of 1.5 billion dollars was announced**. This is a major first step!

2. **The facilitation commissioned a series of short-term thematic studies** on relevant forest and environmental policy issues, including REDD+ in the Congo Basin, ecotourism, sustainable value chains and transhumance, dialogue with China, which **provided useful information** for the elaboration of the Declaration of COMIFAC countries on forests as well as the facilitation's political narrative. Policy Briefs of each study served to inform relevant actors of the sub-region and the international community.

3. Sustained, relentless sub-regional and international campaigns were carried out and took the German Facilitation to several Central African, European, Asian and American capitals to make the case for the ***Fair Deal***. These campaigns have focused on good governance and the sustainable management of Central Africa's forest ecosystems, on the one hand, and on the need to increase international funding and payments for the ecosystem services provided to the planet by the forests of the Congo Basin, on the other. To this end, in its negotiations with the community of donors, the German CBFP Facilitation has retained a reasonable level of expectations for the countries of Central Africa. Scientists note that 25% of the global budget for the fight against climate change should be given to countries with rich forest cover, and thus for the Congo Basin an adequate percentage, as the second largest tropical forest lung in the world.

Together with all our partners, we have taken a major step forward. By joining forces, we have mobilised the international community in support of the Congo Basin. The ***Fair Deal*** is now well known and is advancing the sustainable development of the countries of Central Africa, its people, its forests, and its

biodiversity. The narrative has reinforced the Declaration of Commitment by Central African States with factual elements for increased mobilisation of resources for the planet's second green lung.

The German CBFP Facilitation has thus contributed to advancing several new initiatives, as a political legacy. Among other things, COP 26 in Glasgow proved that the countries of COMIFAC and Central Africa are strong on the international political stage when they share a common vision and a common voice. I wish for the continuation of this. The year 2022 was a difficult one for all of us on the issue of transparency in financing, including for the German CBFP Facilitation. But the final communiqué of the "One Forest Summit" in Libreville in March 2023, with its call for a Fair Deal, for **fair payment** by the international community for the precious ecological services of Central Africa and the Congo Basin, shows that our COMIFAC Declaration of 2021, drawn up together, can succeed. That is my wish for Central Africa.

- 4. The Task Force:** In this context, I welcome the creation of the Task Force "Fair Deal" to improve the way in which international funding for climate and biodiversity is mobilised. At the suggestion of then COMIFAC President Jules Doret Ndongo, Prof. Lee White, Gabonese Minister of Water, Forestry, Sea and Environment in charge of the Climate Plan and the Land Use Plan, Secretary of State of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) Jochen Flasbarth, and Philippe Lacoste, Head of the French Delegation, the plenary of the 19th Meeting of Parties of CBFP (MOP19) decided during the closing panel of MOP19 on 8 July 2022 in Libreville to set up a task force which should develop key elements for the political debate on long-term sustainable financing of the ecological services of the forests and peatlands of the Congo Basin. The Task Force also served as a continuation of the facilitation's political narrative, developing ways forward for the topics and aims defined therein.

The Task Force was officially launched on the sidelines of UNFCCC COP 27 in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, in the presence of the Ministers of Environment of the United Kingdom and Gabon and the State Secretary of the BMZ, as well as the

members of the Task Force. It held its first hybrid meeting on the sidelines of UNCBD COP 15 in Montreal. The subsequent three meetings took place online.

This Task Force concluded its work with a retreat in a hybrid setting in Berlin on 3 July 2023 to answer the open questions on the implementation of the COMIFAC Declaration on the mobilisation of funding, cooperation between donors and the Central African States.

5. The Organisation of the High-Level Political Dialogue between donor countries and Central African countries.

Another major initiative in the political legacy of the German CBFP facilitation was the establishment of the format of high-level meetings between Central African ministers and those of donor countries during sub-regional and international meetings. The organisation of this dialogue, which required a great deal of political investment, validates my opinion of their necessity to address highly sensitive issues and strengthen the level of cooperation and ownership of everything that has taken place within the CBFP.

6. Regional and international outreach: Pavilions and exhibition stands with a significant contribution from the German Facilitation were organised at the World Conservation Congresses: (IUCN) in Marseille (France), Forestry Congress in Seoul and UNFCCC COPs 26 and 27 in Glasgow (UK) and Sharm el Sheikh (Egypt), and UNCBD COP 15 in Montreal (Canada).

This was an active collaboration between several partners, including: The acting Presidency of COMIFAC, the Executive Secretariat of COMIFAC; CAFI and the GIZ COMIFAC Program.

Numerous joint events were organized in the pavilions and as part of official the conference programs. These amounted to about two hundred side events, about twenty high-level events with visits of Presidents and Heads of Government of several donor and African countries. Several high-level political dialogues with the participation of Ministers from Central African and donor countries were organized.

7. Regarding the collaboration with donors and partners: The German CBFP Facilitation has launched an advocacy campaign in favour of the Declaration to donor country capitals in order to increase its ownership and inclusion in ongoing negotiations and upcoming alliances. This also served to seek more funding for the Congo Basin and its peripheries. Meetings were held by videoconference and others in-person with the College of Donors – with the UK (London), with the USA (New York and Washington), with Belgium, European Commission (Brussels), and with Norway (Oslo), with Germany (Berlin) and France (Paris).

Regarding the strengthening of collaboration between the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) and the CBFP, Germany has assumed leadership of these two initiatives. The German CBFP Facilitation worked closely with the CAFI Board and Secretariat to better synchronise and strengthen synergies between the CBFP and CAFI at the political, diplomatic, strategic and operational levels. This effort has also facilitated the participation of the civil society in the CAFI process in a growing and positive dynamic.

COMIFAC – CBFP collaboration: Collaboration was clear and transparent with the former COMIFAC President, His Excellency Minister Jules Doret NDONGO. We worked very closely with him to organise the CBFP's statutory meetings and major conferences in Central Africa and internationally.

COMIFAC is needed as a regional force for the protection of the world's second lung; it is also needed as a skills hub that must provide expertise to COMIFAC countries, particularly on three issues: (1) Expertise for international negotiations; (2) Expertise for determining the ecological inventory of forests and peatlands; (3) Expertise for access to international financial resources. To this end, I have called for increased donor support for COMIFAC.

The German CBFP Facilitation has continued to advocate for funding for COMIFAC through an "Aide-Mémoire". With this in mind, I am pleased to notice that our efforts of running diplomatic missions and with donors have borne fruit. When I took office, only one country, Cameroon, had paid their contributions to COMIFAC in 2020. In 2021, in addition to Cameroon, the Central African

Republic paid. I am very pleased to note that in 2022, three countries paid equal contributions in addition to Cameroon, and that the Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon paid a large part of their arrears amounting to 445,603,832 CFA francs for the 2022 financial year. For the 2023 financial year, Cameroon and Gabon have already paid their equal contributions and Burundi has also paid a large part of its arrears for the current 2023 financial year. A total of 174,337,690 FCFA has already been mobilised.

- 8. Implementation of the N'Djamena Declaration on Transhumance:** On the issue of uncontrolled transhumance in Central Africa, the N'Djamena Declaration remains the platform that should facilitate exchanges of experience between regional and sub-regional institutions in the search for solutions for peaceful transhumance that do not lead to insecurity in the concerned countries. Within this framework and to provide continuity from the previous CBFP Facilitation, the German CBFP Facilitation has organised several meetings, expert conferences, side events and the *Second International Conference of Ministers on Transboundary Transhumance* which have served to move from the political declaration to concrete actions and investments (cf. Final Communiqué of the conference).

To ensure better follow-up of all actions carried out relating to transhumance, ECCAS responded favourably to the recommendation of the meeting of experts, held in Douala, to ensure the political and institutional lead of this process of implementation of the N'Djamena Declaration in close collaboration with IGAD and ECOWAS.

The German CBFP Facilitation has officially and regularly informed the eight countries, the acting Presidents of COMIFAC and ECCAS of the progress of the work and has indicated its willingness to promote new political discussions between the States or between the communities of States. A general information note with details is available from the CBFP facilitation secretariat.

- 9. Continuing the dialogue with China** on science, economics and politics. The triangular project between China, the Congo Basin and Germany aims to promote and strengthen the principle of sustainability in international trade in

tropical timber and Asian investment in sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin. The project is currently being finalised and was presented at the 11th Ordinary Council of COMIFAC Ministers in Bujumbura, Burundi.

10. Consolidation of the partnership's governance: This consolidation took the form of the organisation and successful holding of several CBFP college meetings. Three CBFP Governing Council meetings were held in Kinshasa, Douala and Libreville respectively, and the MOP19, which is a major element of the partnership's governance.

One of the Facilitation's major tasks was to find a new CBFP Facilitator.

The arrival of our new members of the CBFP Governing Council and Co-Leaders of the CBFP colleges, is also worth noting:

The United Kingdom as Co-Leader of the Donors' College; similarly, the Donors' Group of the Glasgow Declaration for the Congo Basin is now part of the CBFP Donors' College. Of course, the United States as Co-Leader of this College facilitated this transition.

The following Co-Leaders have been appointed by the colleges:

- Laval University and RIFFEAC for the scientific college,
- United Kingdom for the Donors College,
- REFACOF with RECEIAC as alternate for the civil society college,
- Volcanoes Safaris and Olam as alternate for the private sector college.

These co-leaders are now new members of the CBFP's Governing Council.

During my term of office, the CBFP welcomed the following new Partners:

- Universität Göttingen - Aforpolis
- Universität Frankfurt, ZIAF
- Sweden

- Angola
- IFED
- Canada
- INBAR
- Bezos Earth Fund

As other potential new members: **There are 13 Civil Society Networks whose admission to the CBFP is in progress.** This would bring the number of college members to 26.

11. A word about the CBFP – strategic and sustained communication for the

Congo Basin and by the Congo Basin: The CBFP as communication platform for the Congo Basin remains a reference at a regional and international level. As mentioned, we have high-performance communication tools at our disposal. From 2020-2022, an average of 100,000 monthly visits and **1.2 million hits** were recorded on the CBFP's websites, and more than **3,119 articles**, event announcements and job offers from partners were published.

Concerning social media, we have new subscribers every day:

- On Facebook: 2,730 subscribers with a publication reach of 4,504;
- On Twitter: 1023 followers, 2173 tweets and 24,626 comments;
- An up-to-date Flickr photo database of 8891 photos;
- The CBFP Flash News, with more than 5,000 subscribers, shares the results and success stories of its partners in French and English on a monthly basis with thousands of subscribers in the Congo Basin in particular, but also throughout Africa, Europe, America and Asia.

All of the CBFP's communications tools are available to its members.

Finally, I should also mention **my recent missions to Cameroon, Rwanda, Burundi, Gabon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo**, where I held working meetings with about a dozen ministers and prime ministers; **and to the capitals of donor countries: Washington, New York, Paris, Brussels, London and Berlin**, where I held high-level meetings with donors and meetings with some of the local CBFP college members. This mission also served to promote CAFI's support in these countries.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate my thanks for your actions and efforts in favour of the Congo Basin, a heritage for humanity, for the conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity, for the fight against climate change and for community development.

Much has been done, but much remains to be done. This is why, while congratulating the two CBFP Co-Facilitators, Germany is prepared, through me, to join them to continue the actions they have begun.

I know that the voice of the countries of Central Africa is now being heard in the major international debates, and that the importance of the forests of the Congo Basin and their role as the planet's lungs in regulating the climate are also being recognised. All of this is a remarkable step forward that all the CBFP's partner members will continue to support.

On this note, I want to express my many thanks for the dedicated and successful commitment of Co-Facilitator Raymond Mbitikon and the entire Team of the German Facilitation: Bertille Mayen, Christelle Mafotie, Dany Pokem, Francis Tallah, Johannes Haas, Julian Harbrecht, Lesly Sauthon, Merline Touko, Zoe Irmschler.

Lastly, I wish the new French-Gabonese CBFP Facilitation the best of luck.

Hon Dr Christian Ruck

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