

HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL DIALOGUE

December 10, 2020, Kinshasa

USA STATEMENT

Your Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen -- it is a pleasure to speak to you today on the occasion of the High Level Political Dialogue.

The United States has strongly supported the Congo Basin Forest Partnership since its inception. Today I reaffirm our continued engagement and express our support of the CBFP's work to promote the conservation and sustainable management of the Congo Basin's forest ecosystems.

The U.S. continues to strengthen and build ties between African institutions and stakeholders to encourage coordinated action for biodiversity conservation and enhanced natural resource management to address critical threats such as illegal logging, wildlife trafficking; and climate change. To tackle wildlife trafficking, the U.S. continues to partner with member countries to address serious threats from poaching, the commercial trade in bush meat, trafficking in wildlife products, and wildlife disease. To address impacts of climate change, the United States works with CBFP partners and multilateral donor platforms and private organizations to reduce emissions from deforestation using tools within the REDD+ policy framework, such as SilvaCarbon and other strategic programs to build capacity for monitoring and verification.

The United States is actively involved in development work in the Congo Basin, work which supports the goals of this partnership. USAID's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment – CARPE -- is the primary mechanism for U.S. support to the CBFP, and currently manages a budget of approximately \$50 million annually, and draws on the expertise of local and international NGOs and America's own Fish and Wildlife Service and Forest Service to conserve wildlife and forests for the long-term benefit of people in the countries involved.

From strengthening protected areas and empowering communities in the management of their own forests, to analyses of biodiversity across the basin, to investments in policy reform, law enforcement, food security and livelihoods and engaging the private sector in the development of a green economy that reduces pressure on natural resources, CARPE offers a comprehensive and whole-of-government approach.

Sustainable forest management and wildlife conservation in Central Africa is challenging, even more so during the global pandemic, but our mission remains timely and critical, and the United States supports these ideals of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership. We appreciate the good work made by Congo Basin countries in strengthening the management of their forests and encourage them to seek new opportunities for taking action and ownership of the CBFP mission.

We congratulate CBFP and the Facilitation team for its ambitious agenda. We look forward to working with all partners to build an even more effective mechanism for dialogue and action.
Thank you.