



# The forests of the Congo Basin: Stakes, Challenges, opportunities and perspectives

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Congo Forest Partnership meeting of Partners  
Libreville, 5-8 July 2022



# The general context of forest management and conservation in central Africa



# The socio-economic context of forest management and conservation in central Africa

The 4 key elements which have most impacts on forests management and conservation in central Africa



Demography



Agriculture



Infrastructure



Mining



# A young population and strong population growth



Current population estimates:

**163 million inhabitants (20-30 millions)** living in near proximity of the forests)



Population growth:

**2.5 – 3% per annum**



Fertility rate still high:

**6-7 children per woman** (exception of Gabon and CAR)



Projection of total population in 2050:

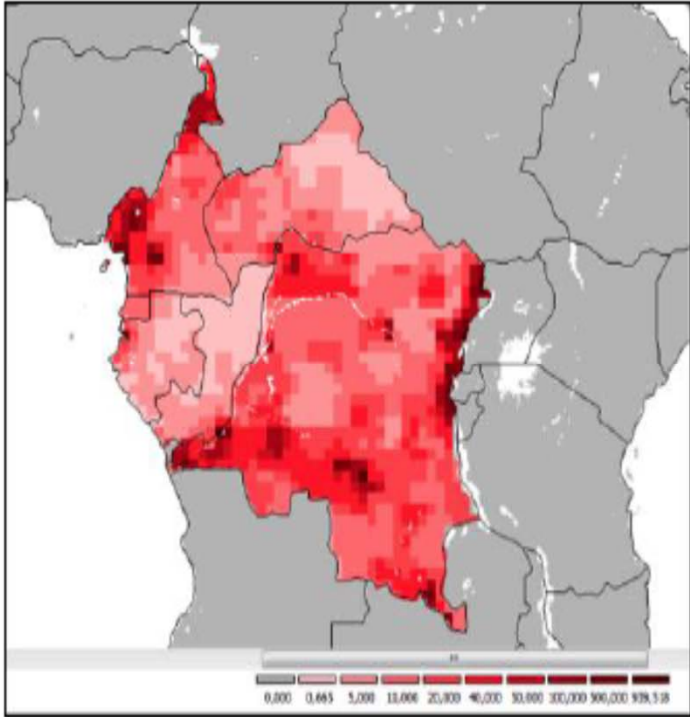
**384 millions inhabitants**



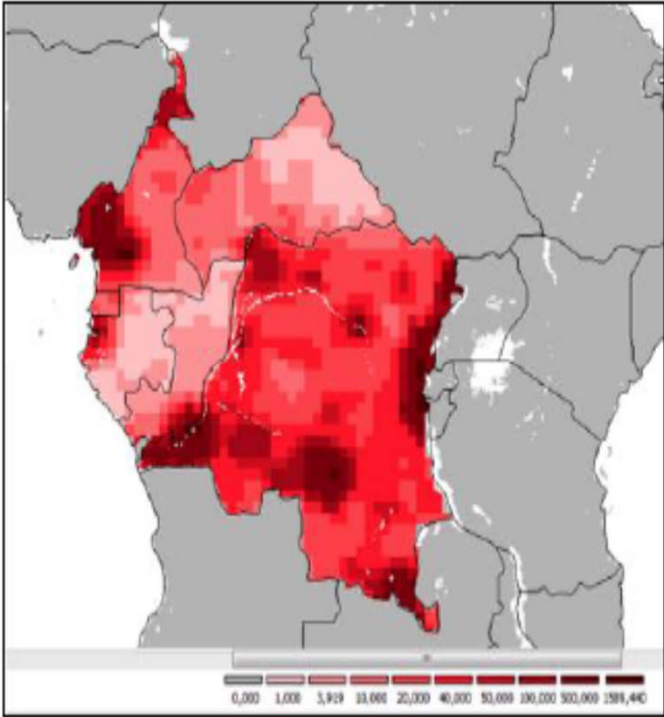
**45%** of the population is under 15 years old while about **3%** is older than 60 years



Trends in population density



Densité de la population (habitants/km<sup>2</sup>) en 2000



Densité de la population (habitants/km<sup>2</sup>) en 2030

Source: IIASA 2011



# Migration



## Voluntary migration

Voluntary displacement of individuals or populations from one country to another or from one region to another, for economic, social, political or cultural reasons (Economic benefit).



## Force migration

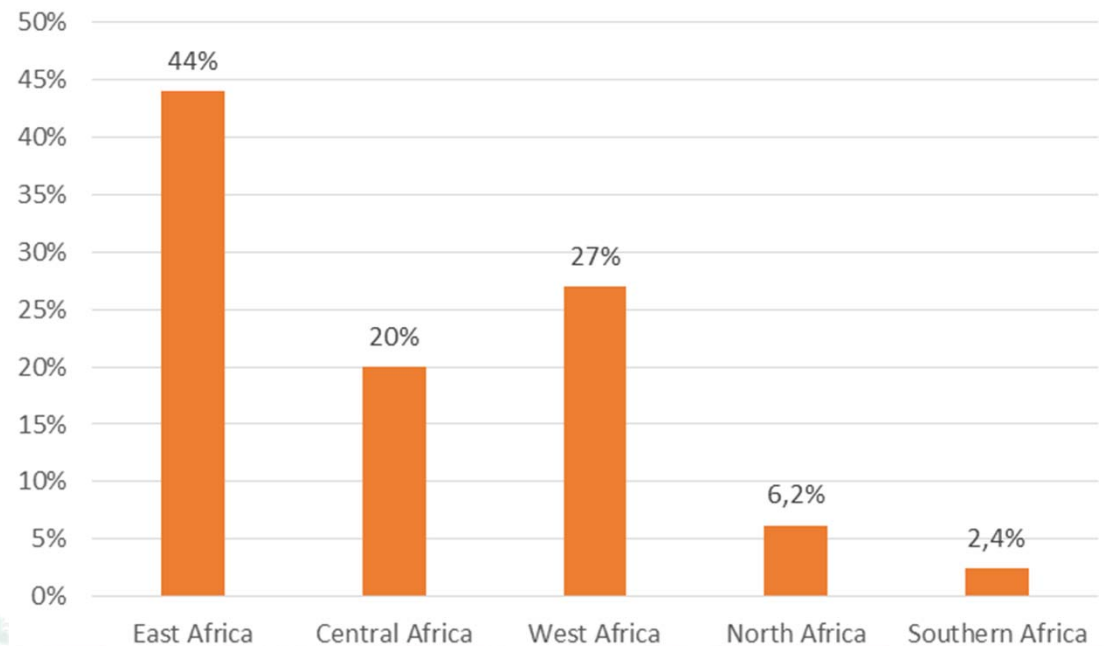
The IOM defines forced migration as "involuntary, forced and suffered migration caused by a variety of factors, but which involves the use of force, coercion or duress" , The main consequences are refugee crisis, impact and pressure on natural resources, agriculture and food system and social, (RCA, RDC Cameroon are the most affected by this type of migration)



# Distribution of undernourished people in Africa (FAO, 2020)

In 2020 281.6 million African were **undernourished**.

Central Africa needs to produce more **foodstuff for its inhabitants**.



Distribution of undernourished people in Africa (FAO, 2020)



# An increasingly land-demanding agriculture

- Generalization of slash and burn
- The increase in production is coupled with the increase in cultivated areas
- Due to the increasing population density, the clearing-use-fallow cycle is considerably reduced. Fallow land, the duration of which is gradually reduced, no longer allows the soil to regenerate sufficiently. Yields on these plots are therefore reduced.
- Shrinking of available areas per capita: land has become a coveted resource. The increase in population density thus leads to major competition in space.
- Ongoing development of agribusiness





# Central Africa: Africa's poorest infrastructure sub-region

**Infrastructure:** Ranking on the Africa Infrastructure Index 2020 by subregion

1. North Africa
2. Southern Africa
3. West Africa
4. East Africa
5. Central Africa

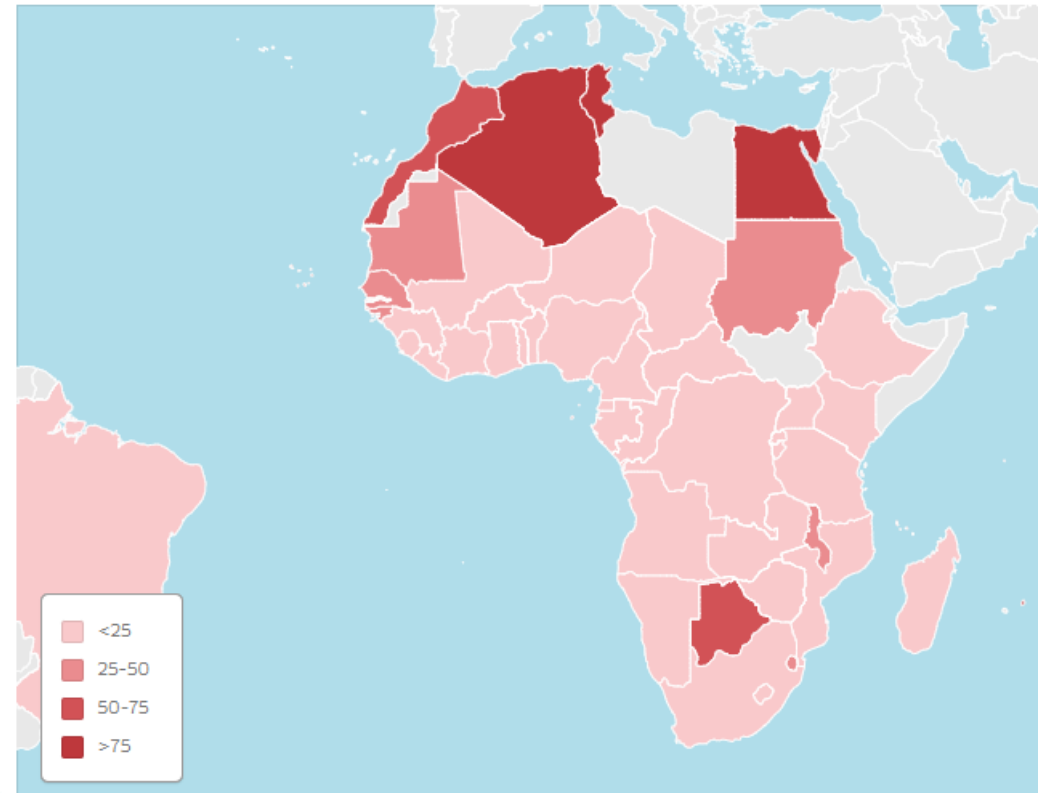
- Central Africa is the least developed subregion in terms of infrastructure
- 3 countries of central Africa are amongst the least developed of the continent in terms of infrastructure



# Infrastructure: the case of roads

- Central Africa covers about **6.6 million km<sup>2</sup>**
- About **24,400 km** of paved roads
- **2.2 km** of roads per 100 km<sup>2</sup>
- **0.3 Km** of paved roads par 100 km<sup>2</sup>

## Paved roads

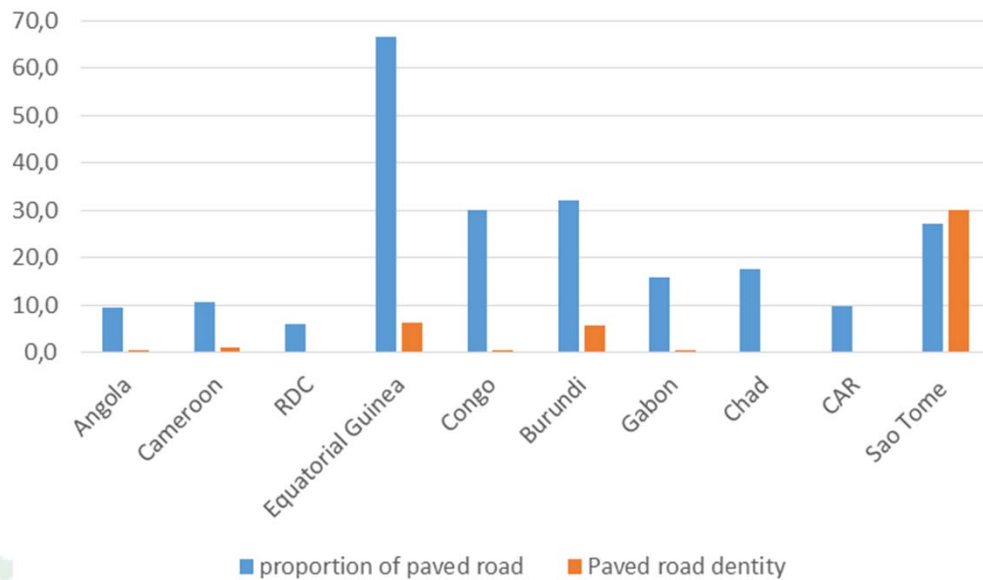


Source: <https://competitivite.ferdi.fr/en/indicators/paved-roads>

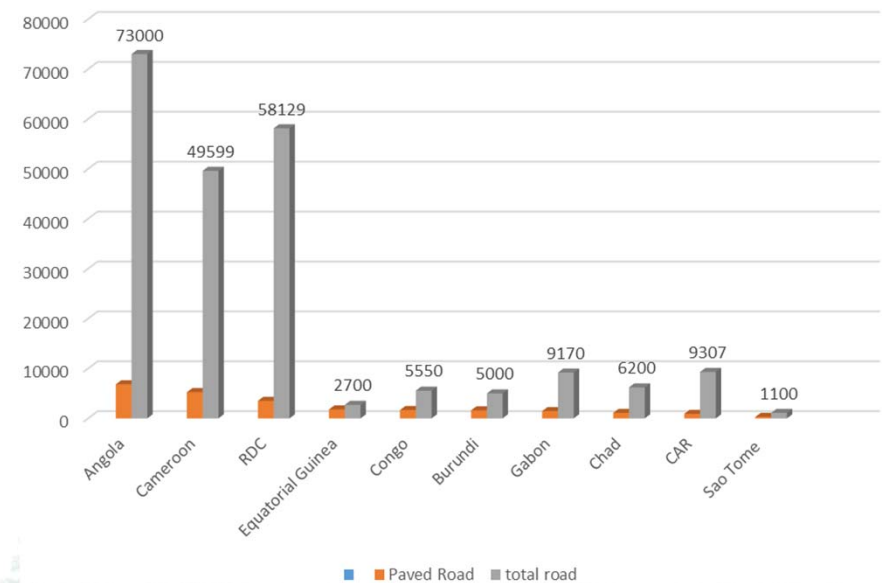


# Paved roads in central Africa by country

## Percentage of paved road and road density



## Total road vs Paved road



# And the mining sector...

- Important economic sector for the financial resources of the states
- Exceptionally abundant mineral resources, but still largely untapped.
- Prospects for the development of the mining sector in the Congo Basin are improving due to high prices and new consumption paradigms
- A sector that creates very few jobs, especially decent jobs
- Mixed or very insignificant contribution to the fight against poverty
- The development of industrial mining in the Congo Basin is creating competition with other land uses, including forestry and conservation.



# Conclusion on the general context of central Africa



**A growing young population** to feed today and tomorrow



**Forced migration** within the subregion has an impact on the use of natural resources and agricultural production



**Subsistence agriculture** with low productivity and high land demand



**Undeniable infrastructure construction** needs

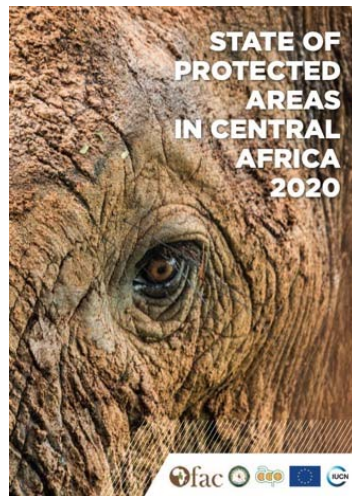


**A mining sector to be developed** in coherence with other land use sectors

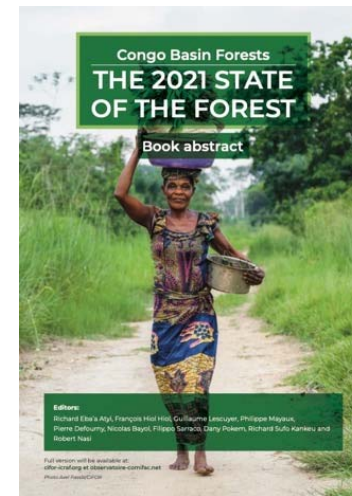


# Context of Forest Management and Conservation

## OFAC references



State of the Protected Areas report  
(EDAP 2020)

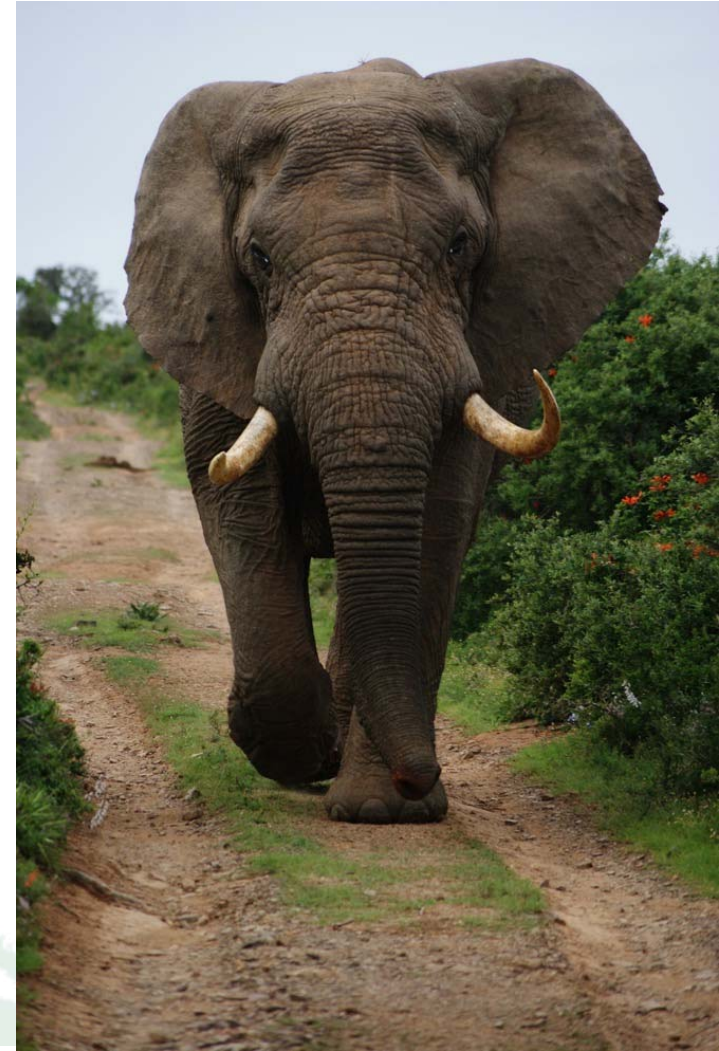


State of the Forests report  
(EDF 2021)



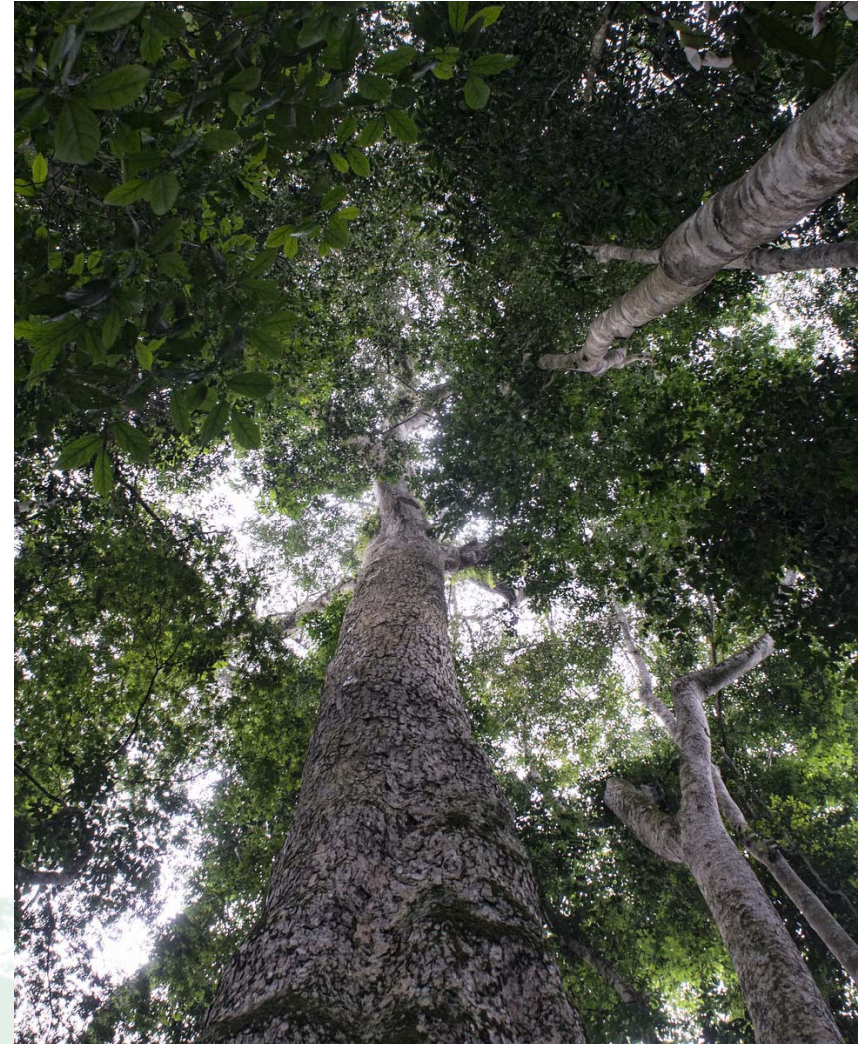
# The biological diversity of central Africa

- Central Africa is a priority region for biodiversity conservation because of its exceptional heritage and high level of endemism
- Its ecosystems have the value of a common good, both for current generations, particularly the 40 million people who benefit from the natural resources they provide, and for future generations
- As in the rest of the planet, the biodiversity of the subregion is threatened, particularly through poaching (better organized and equipped), deforestation and the expansion of shifting agriculture or so-called "development" activities



# The forest cover and trends of its evolution

- Large areas of almost untouched dense forests, but an increasing trend towards deforestation and degradation
- A unique carbon sequestration capacity at global level
- Trend analysis shows a considerable increase in the annual rate of disturbance in Central African tropical rainforests over the last five years (2015-2020)
- Central African forests, represent a lifeline for the whole of humanity that is faced with the climate crisis and the extinction of biodiversity elements.
- The fate of the Congo Basin forests must therefore be seen as a joint responsibility of the countries of Central Africa and the international community,





# Challenges to forest ecosystems management and conservation

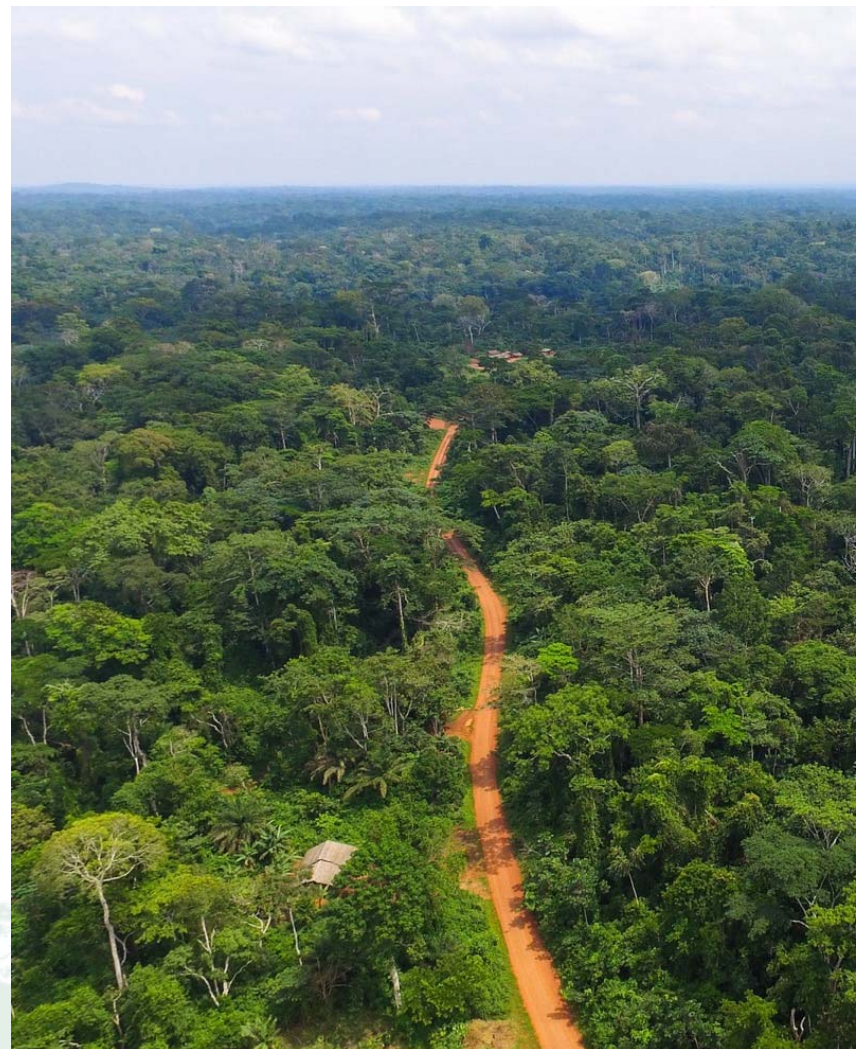


# The general Challenge

To reconcile the legitimate needs of pressing economic and social development, while ensuring the sustainability of development efforts, and contributing to the fight against the climate crisis, and that related to the disappearance of elements of biodiversity.

This involves:

- For the States and populations of Central Africa: taking ownership of the concepts and approaches of low-carbon development
- For international community: supporting the states and actors of Central Africa, for the common good of humanity



# Specific challenge 1: implement multilevel coordination

- Institutional coordination amongst land use sectors within the national (agriculture, forestry & conservation, mining, infrastructure...)
- Spatial Coordination of activities at the national, landscape and local levels
- Coordination between technical and financial partners
- Coordination between countries of central Africa
- Coordination between the donor community and governments of central Africa countries



## Specific challenge 2: mainstreaming conservation in national development priorities

- Develop a case on the potential of conservation to contribute to socio-economic development of countries of central Africa
- Attract the private sector to invest in conservation



# Specific challenge 3: Maintaining a high profile of Central Africa at the international level

- Fulfilling the commitments of Central African countries to international conventions
- Maintaining access to international markets for Central African commodities
- Securing fair and equitable financing for the overall environmental services provided by forest ecosystems in the Congo Basin



# Specific challenge 4: rights of local and indigenous people

- Encourage the participation of local and indigenous peoples in decision-making concerning the management of natural resources
- Recognize the rights of local and indigenous peoples regarding the ownership and use of natural resources and related to land tenure.
- Taking into account local knowledge in the management of natural resources



# Specific challenge 5: knowledge management

- Improving the knowledge of the complex forest ecosystems of central Africa through applied and innovative research.
- Encouraging decision making on forest management that is based on scientific evidence
- Document successful experiences and practices of forest ecosystem management
- Make available credible information for use in forest management





General challenge and specific challenges





# Opportunities



# Opportunities

- Young and dynamic work force
- Political will (Declaration of ECCAS/COMIFAC countries for the Congo Basin forests and their vicinity)
- Renewed interest of the international community on the forests of the Congo Basin (CAFI, Berlin Symposium, Glasgow declarations...)
- Initiatives to promote forest landscape restoration (UN decade on restoration, AFR100)
- Existence of regional political initiatives through ECCAS, COMIFAC and CBFP
- Improving knowledge management systems (OFAC)
- Better knowledge on the dynamics of forest ecosystems in central Africa
- Recognized good forest management practices



# Prospects

- Effective implementation of land use planning
- Generalized landscape approaches to the management of forest resources
- Mainstreaming of landscape restoration practices
- More applied research using national and regional expertise (e.g RESSAC Project)
- Higher political profile for the forestry and environment sector of central Africa



# Thank you

[cifor-icraf.org](http://cifor-icraf.org) | [globallandscapesforum.org](http://globallandscapesforum.org) | [resilient-landscapes.org](http://resilient-landscapes.org)

CIFOR-ICRAF envisions a world in which people enjoy livelihoods supported by healthy, productive landscapes made resilient through the transformative power of forests, trees and agroforestry.

