



THE CONGO BASIN FOREST PARTNERSHIP (CBFP)

EU FACILITATION 2016-2017 – ROAD MAP

1. CONTEXT

The context in which CBFP cooperation takes place has evolved significantly since the inception of the Partnership in 2003. The drivers of deforestation, the sustainable forest management approaches and the importance of these issues at the global level have all changed considerably. As the Congo Basin countries have broadly integrated the principles of sustainable forest management into their national policies, Partnership action needs to address growing external threats to the Congo Basin Forests and focus on more effective coordination and cooperation, channelling and capitalising on accumulated experience and knowledge in order to improve policy and investment decisions. While the number of CBFP partners has increased steadily, it is proving increasingly difficult to attract candidates to provide the facilitation. The increased number of partners has also created a need to find new ways of structuring interaction in order to sustain an effective dialogue among partners.

2. OVERARCHING OBJECTIVE

In this context, the overarching objective of the EU Facilitation is to reinforce and develop the CBFP, in order to safeguard its relevance and enhance its impact and sustainability. This is required in order to make sure that the CBFP continues to effectively promote the key objectives enunciated in the 1999 Yaoundé Declaration and made operational through the 2005 COMIFAC Treaty regarding the conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Central Africa.

3. BASIC PRINCIPLES

The EU Facilitation will operate transparently and build on the comparative strengths of this non-binding partnership and its collective achievements so far.

In providing the facilitation the EU will build on its specific strengths, which include a strong diplomatic presence in the region, a network of thematic experts in its delegations and at headquarters, a strong working relationship with the regional organizations concerned, and a focus on regional cooperation as a key to ensuring sustainable forest management.

The EU Facilitation will maintain a flexible and dynamic approach, ready to adjust its strategy based on experience, in order to promote the overarching objective as effectively as possible.

4. PRIORITY OBJECTIVES AND RELATED PRIORITY ACTIONS

The EU Facilitation will be oriented towards a set of objectives related to increasing the impact of the Partnership and the efficiency of the interaction and cooperation among CBFP partners. These are set out in section 4.1. below together with related priority actions.

The EU Facilitation will also pursue a number of thematic objectives set out in section 4.2 below together with some related priority actions.

4.1. PROMOTING MORE EFFICIENT INTERACTION AND COOPERATION IN CBFP

4.1.1. Strengthening CBFP by creating a results-oriented governance structure

A key priority of the EU Facilitation will be to reinforce CBFP governance. The nature and gravity of the challenges facing the Congo Basin Forests require improved possibilities for discussing policy issues and following up on common agreements and decisions. Effective facilitation requires concrete steps forwards in this area. Therefore, the EU Facilitation will take the following action:

- Reinforcing the governance of the Partnership and promoting an enhanced policy dialogue by establishing a CBFP Council with active participation of partners through representative partner colleges built around the various categories of partners, while fully preserving the key role of the annual Meetings of Parties.

4.1.2. Promoting knowledge-based decision-making

The wide range of development actions, research and experts in fields relevant to the protection of the Congo Basin Forests constitute a considerable resource, which could be much better utilized if coordination were to be significantly improved.

With delegations in each country in the region, each with its own environmental experts, with well-established scientific research networks and the bulk of major donors in the region counting among its Member States, the EU is well placed to promote knowledge production and knowledge-sharing in the Congo Basin. In this regard, the EU Facilitation will undertake the following actions:

- Establishing an inventory of existing information systems and systems for supporting political decisions in the region;
- Establishing a research and training network based on three complementary pillars (RIFFEAC, the US Academic Consortium, and the Central Africa forest research network currently under construction);
- Improving the way relevant analysis and information are made available to decision makers.

4.1.3. Strengthening existing mechanisms and tools for more effective coordination and cooperation

A key added value of CBFP, widely appreciated by partners, is the ability of the Partnership to gather a wide range of stakeholders during the annual Meetings of Parties, allowing these to present and discuss their respective actions and results. The EU Facilitation will continue the support to the organization of these meetings while working to reinforce their impact at both technical and political levels.

During and between these annual meetings, the EU Facilitation will support the coordination of activities implemented by CBFP partners, in particular those related to Axis 2 (Management and sustainable development of forestry resources), Axis 3 (Conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity) and Axis 4 (The fight against climate change and desertification) of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan.

This will be done by:

- Promoting adaptation of existing systems in order to make available a database of CBFP technical and financial partners' interventions organised in line with the main elements of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan;
- Supporting coordination platforms and thematic exchange among partners involved in implementation of activities, and linking this continuous work to the organization of thematic workshops during the annual Meetings of Parties;

- Strengthening linkages between the existing working groups and processes (including those between the COMIFAC Working Groups and the Coordination Meetings arranged by the COMIFAC Executive Secretariat).

4.1.4. Strengthening COMIFAC and enable it to take on a lead role in CBFP

The EU Facilitation aims to increasingly involve COMIFAC in the facilitation effort and to support the organization, with a view to enable it to take over the facilitation of CBFP in 2018 supported by an external partner.

While COMIFAC should be in a position to offer its partners regional priorities for action and to monitor the implementation of the ensuing actions, the current reality is that COMIFAC faces severe difficulties in playing this role. This seriously hampers effective implementation of the provisions laid down in the 2005 COMIFAC Treaty.

The EU Facilitation will therefore take the following actions:

- Engaging in high-level political dialogue with COMIFAC Member States in order to promote effective execution of COMIFAC's mandate and the honouring of the financial commitments of Member States to the organization;
- Promoting the relevance and use of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan as a means of strengthening the coordination of CBFP partners' operational activities;
- Promoting more effective contributions by civil society and the private sector to the planning and implementation of COMIFAC activities.

4.1.5. Promoting a rationalised and effective division of labour among the main regional organisations concerned

Overlapping mandates and insufficient coordination between the main regional organizations concerned, as well as between these and their respective Member States, have resulted in inefficient use of dedicated resources and low effectiveness of action at regional level aimed at promoting the objectives of the 1999 Yaoundé Declaration. Therefore the EU Facilitation will take the following action:

- Promoting the ownership and political responsibility of the main regional organizations concerned and their Member States, with the aim of clarifying the institutional landscape for action at regional level aimed at promoting the objectives enunciated in 1999 Yaoundé Declaration on the conservation and sustainable management of the Congo Basin Forests. This will be done through high-level dialogue with the regional organizations concerned as well as with their respective Member States – in close coordination with the main international partners of these organisations - in order to promote a clarification of the respective mandates of the organizations and the reduction of institutional duplication and of competing initiatives and activities.

4.2. THEMATIC PRIORITY OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

The Facilitation will take forward the substantial ongoing work within CBFP on biodiversity and the governance and sustainable use of forestry resources, while giving particular attention to the following challenges of growing importance:

4.2.1. Combatting poaching and wildlife trafficking

As noted in the 2015 EU report "Larger than Elephants", the scale of the wild-life crisis in Africa is immense. Growing wild-life trafficking threatens unique biodiversity and provides a rich source of illicit financing for various armed groups, which threaten the stability and security in countries in Central Africa and adjacent regions. This serious challenge requires effective cooperation across borders and across ministerial portfolios. In line with the 2016 EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking¹, the Facilitation intends to pursue the following related actions:

- Organizing conciliation meetings in the more fragile trans-boundary areas, for example around the Garamba-Chinko, TNS or TRIDOM (Dja-Odzala-Minkebe Tri-National etc);
- Building on the success of the "poaching/bush meat" stream held during the last Facilitation, in order to bring forward the discussion on the establishment of guidelines for the sustainable management of bush meat;
- Exploring the possibilities of developing a "rapid response mechanism", which would allow for the rapid mobilisation of resources and actions in response to poaching events.

4.2.2. Addressing the impact of non-forestry sectors and related land-use decisions on the Congo Basin Forests

The impact of economic activities such as mining, palm oil production and oil exploration are having a growing impact on the Congo Basin Forests. These linkages have to be addressed through cross-sectoral approaches requiring inter-ministerial coordination within the governments concerned. The EU Facilitation plans to undertake the following actions:

- Attempting to mobilize key companies in the agro-industrial, mining and oil industries through workshops aimed at officers from their respective departments for Environment & Sustainable Development. This should i.a. allow for the initiation of a dialogue with these companies on the competing interests regarding the use of forested land. It will also promote initiatives for improved land management and spatial planning of the different uses of land (cf. also item 4.2.3. below);

¹ COM(2016) 87 final

- Exploring to what extent national decision makers can be effectively sensitised to key cross-sectoral linkages of major importance to the Congo Basin Forests through the mechanisms and activities of ECCAS.

4.2.3. Promoting sustainable economic development of local communities, including through increased cooperation with the private sector

The economic development of local communities in the areas covered by the Congo Basin Forests is not only a priority in itself. It is also key to ensuring the conservation and sustainable management of these forests. The communities concerned must be provided with alternatives to the current informal and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources.

For this objective to be achieved the private sector must be involved. Yet, without an "enabling environment" the private sector lacks credible options. For example, the difficulty in obtaining an entry visa makes eco tourism unviable in some countries.

The EU Facilitation will work with COMIFAC, ECCAS and others to conduct the following actions aimed at promoting collaboration between CBFP partners, COMIFAC Member States and the private sector:

- Establishing an inventory of private sector actors with links to the Congo Basin Forests;
- Promoting the development of strategies which recognize the land rights of local people and favour community-based development initiatives in the context of various initiatives for improved land management and spatial planning.

4.2.4. Climate change

The role of the forests of the Congo Basin (second global forest area) in the fight against climate change is particularly important and should be dealt with in a consistent manner by the countries of the sub-region which share these forests. For several years cooperation in the context of COMIFAC, supported by the CBFP, has enabled Central African countries to coordinate a common approach in the international climate negotiations and provided possibilities for training and exchange of experiences to national focal points for climate change issues. These trainings and exchanges have also been regularly open to other members of the CBFP (including civil society). The EU Facilitation will build further on this momentum by:

- Facilitating exchange between national focal points (especially through the COMIFAC Working Group on Climate) and climate negotiators of Central African countries in order to enable these countries to develop and maintain strong common positions in international climate negotiations;

- Promoting exchanges with major ongoing climate-related initiatives in the Congo Basin (CAFI, bilateral or multilateral programs in the field of REDD+, NAP, NDC etc);
- Facilitating the adoption of new climate finance mechanisms by the countries of the sub-region by supporting workshops dedicated to this topic and giving voice to the specific concerns of these countries in the context of international climate negotiations.