

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

Members 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 in charge of the Climate Plan and the 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, Donors, 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 of **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 from Gabon by **His Excellency Michel Stéphane BONDA**, Minister Delegate of Water, Forest, Sea and Environment in charge of the Climate Plan 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 of 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 and, at their side, His Excellency Prof. Lee White of Gabon.

As for the High Level Political Dialogue between the Donor Representatives of Glasgow/PFBC and the Ministers of the Central African countries members of ECCAS/COMIFAC, it 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 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 planet.
- The CBFP Parties insist on the importance of pursuing in an accelerated manner the implementation of the commitments of the declaration announced in Berlin by the ECCAS/COMIFAC countries for the forests of the Congo Basin and their periphery and confirmed in Glasgow at COP 26.
- The Parties welcomed the successful holding of the High-Level Political Dialogue, which enabled them to obtain more details on the financial commitments made in Glasgow for the COMIFAC member countries (USD 1.5 billion) and to discuss the arrangements and financial mechanisms that would facilitate better coordination and greater effectiveness 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 both improved governance and the disbursement of payments for environmental services;
- The parties propose to intensify the institutional dialogue for the establishment of appropriate instruments for payment of ecosystem services such as PES/carbon, biodiversity and water, 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 other ECOWAS and IGAD sub-regional organisations. The Parties welcome the suggestion from the German Facilitation to propose the organisation of a "N'Djamena 2" Conference with ECCAS, in collaboration with its funding partners.
- In this regard, 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 for the pooling of resources is recommended, and the Parties encourage the technical and financial partners to contribute to the preparation of priority investment programmes on transhumance in the context of the preparation of N'Djamena 2.
- The Parties welcome the holding 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 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 in order to ensure better regional ownership, and to systematically seize the opportunities for structured dialogue and exchanges within the CBFP, which is undergoing strong 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 and organisation of the takeover 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 on the physical and legal security of medium- and long-term investments in the landscapes
 - 2- Accelerate the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment of COMIFAC Member States for the Forests of Central Africa and the call for equitable financing, and the Joint Declaration of the Congo Basin Donors of the COP26 in Glasgow for better forest governance and access to a fair percentage of climate and biodiversity financial resources.
 - 3- Beyond forestry and the environment, cooperate closely with other key sectors of the rural economy 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 the China Dialogue 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 as well as 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 the main points of the recommendations:

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

Spatial planning is seen by several World Conventions as a basic tool to ensure 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 and to do 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. And 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 wood economy

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.

Concerning the improvement of the image and reputation of forest governance in Central Africa

3. Support the operationalisation of national digital traceability and legality verification systems and facilitate bridges between private and public systems.
4. Encourage and promote forest certification for legality and sustainability.
5. Support countries to set up economic intelligence units to manage the sustainable development of the timber sector and anticipate market developments.

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

6. 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.

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

7. 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
8. Integrate into public procurement regulations the obligation to purchase legal timber
9. Provide a stable regulatory and fiscal framework to attract investment in wood processing for SMEs.
10. Strengthen the capacity of stakeholders through the development of vocational training.
11. Promote products made from diversification species, including bamboo.

Stream 2 Biodiversity: The Future of Protected Areas

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

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

With regard to effective management models and sustainable financing of Protected Areas in Central Africa, COMIFAC Member States are invited to:

- 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

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

- 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

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:

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

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

- 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: Opportunities and Challenges in Central Africa", the parties are invited to

- 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, 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.
- 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
- 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.
- 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
- Harness the potential for restoration around protected areas to reduce pressure on remaining high conservation value areas
- 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 the 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 Glasgow/CBFP donors and the Ministers of Central African countries 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, in particular Stream 1a CAFI; Stream 1b Gabon and ATIBT, Stream 2 COMIFAC, AWF/WCS; Stream 3 CIFOR/IRT, GIZ. These thanks extend to the resource persons for the organisation of 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 Worms 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 - Aforpolis; 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 in a special Gala evening. 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 of CBFP Facilitation led by France.

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 then delivered messages to the Plenary, respectively on the Glasgow Pleadgment of US\$1.7 billion for indigenous peoples and local communities 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 closing high-level political 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 **some fifty** related/parallel events were also organised for all the audiences present.

Done in Libreville (Gabon), 8 July 2022

The participants