

**Final Communiqué of the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Parties of the Congo Basin  
Forest Partnership from 24 to 27 October 2017  
Douala, Cameroon**

From 24 to 27 October 2017, the Parties of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) convened in Douala, Cameroon, for their 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Parties expressed their sincere appreciation to the Cameroonian authorities for their hospitality and for their contribution to the successful outcome of the meeting.

The main outcomes of the proceedings were as follows:

- Parties noted the significant progress made towards achieving the objective of reinvigorating CBFP cooperation, by highlighting the added value of the Partnership, by giving greater credit and visibility to this common regional platform, and by taking common responsibility for its functioning and development;
- Parties noted in particular the significant increase in the number of CBFP members and welcomed that the new cooperation structures, the CBFP colleges and Council, are now well anchored and have started to function as intended in accordance with the updated Cooperation framework adopted at the 16th Meeting of Parties in Kigali last November. These structures have reinforced the possibilities for structured dialogue and efficient exchanges within this fast-growing partnership.
- Parties expressed their satisfaction with and appreciation of the achievements of the European Union Facilitation, which ends in December 2017, and welcomed the confirmation that the European Union will remain an engaged and active member of CBFP. Parties expressed their hope that the next Facilitation would continue to work in the spirit of the outgoing European Facilitation and would capitalize and build on its achievements. Parties stressed the need to find a constructive and effective solution to the issue of the next Facilitation in time to ensure a smooth transition when the European Union Facilitation comes to an end.
- On the basis of a structured dialogue within the CBFP colleges and Council, Parties adopted a set of Medium-Term Priorities, which provides a clear description of the priorities on which partners agreed to focus CBFP cooperation during the period 2018-2022.
- Parties also agreed to introduce, on a pilot basis, a system of annual CBFP priorities and to select the following two priorities to be implemented on

this basis until their 18th meeting:

- Strengthening the integration of the security dimension in wildlife management. In this context, Parties, including donors, noted the resolutions of the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference of the OCSFA member countries held in Douala on 26 October 2017.
  - Building a database to monitor implementation and results of activities carried out by CBFP partners
- Parties called for further efforts to promote the following two objectives identified during their 16th meeting;
- Seek ways of engaging with other key sectors beyond forestry and environment, such as agriculture, mining, petroleum exploration and exploitation;
  - Promote a significantly strengthened engagement of the Partnership with private sector entities.
- The thematic streams produced a number of recommendations on the key issues of relevance to the protection and sustainable management of Congo Basin forests, including climate change, as well as a number of other documents and tools of value to CBFP partners. The main recommendations are set out below.

### **Stream 1: Forest and land use planning policies**

**Recommendation 1:** Develop a practical guide entitled "Technological decision-making tools for the Congo Basin" to guide users and practitioners based on the kind of information they search for. This practical guide will be unveiled at the next MOP and distributed to participants.

There are decision-making tools (GIS, mapping tools, database portals) now available or under development provided by various institutions and organizations and intended for actors conducting activities in the Congo Basin.

The tools include the OFAC / COMIFAC Land Planning Atlas, media developed by AGEOS, national forest atlases, as well as other tools specially designed to help monitor timber legality such as the Timber Trade Portal (ATIBT), the Open Timber Portal (WRI), FLEGT Watch (CIDT), etc.

CBFP partners are keen to understand the specificities and complementary nature of these tools in order to harness those that are best suited to help them conduct of their activities and strategies.

To this end, Stream 1 recommends that the promoters and carriers of these different tools come together in 2018 to develop a quick practical guide themed "Technological decision-making tools for the Congo basin". The quick manual would guide practitioners based on the type of information they seek.

Stream 1 further recommends that CBFP partners who are currently developing participatory mapping tools in conjunction with indigenous peoples and local communities in the Congo Basin be involved in this work.

The practical guide could be unveiled at the next MOP in 2018.

**Recommendation 2:** Establish a consultation process for interested CBFP partners to bring their input to the Brazzaville roadmap for strengthening the effectiveness of participatory forestry in Central Africa, and present a status report on the consultation process at the next MOP.

In September 2017, an expert meeting of several CBFP partners (including COMIFAC, FAO, the Republic of Congo, Nature +) launched the "Brazzaville Roadmap" to enhance the effectiveness of participatory forestry in Central Africa.

The roadmap is due for submission to the COMIFAC Council of Ministers to ensure political ownership and thus shape future national policies and strategies.

Stream 1 recommends that prior to submission to the Council of Ministers, the initial version of the roadmap presented during the stream's deliberations be enriched with systematic input, going forward, from the CBFP's numerous partners who have gained knowledge and experience in engaging indigenous people and local communities in forest management.

Stream 1 recommends that a consultation process be organized in 2018 for CBFP partners interested in the roadmap and that a status report on the consultation process be presented at the next MOP in 2018, possibly – in the event that the process is completed – with a view to validation of the "Brazzaville Roadmap" by the Council of Ministers to be held on the heels of this next MOP.

**Recommendation 3:** Develop a regional policy paper on the integration of legality in the wood procurement policies of public contracts of Member States in the sub-region and their international partners. The policy paper should be prepared by ECCAS in 2018 to be submitted for technical validation at the next MOP.

According to Stream 1 participants, the most realistic and feasible measure that can be taken in the short and medium term to promote timber legality on domestic markets in Central Africa is to foster the adoption of suitable conditions for public procurement of the countries' timber supplies.

These public contracts account for potentially large volumes, and could accelerate the gradual formalization and legalization of timber harvesting and processing sectors on domestic markets.

To this end, Stream 1 recommends that a regional policy paper on the public procurement policies of States in the sub-region and their international partners be developed by ECCAS in 2018, for technical validation at the next CBFP Meeting of Parties.

**Recommendation 4 :** Conduct, under the auspices of the COMIFAC General Secretariat, a feasibility study on the possibilities for the Congo Basin forest nations to adopt a tax incentive aimed at gradually formalizing the domestic wood industries. The findings of the study will be considered during a technical validation session that will take place during the next MOP.

The COMIFAC Convergence Plan 2015-2025 calls for the "strengthening and harmonization of policies, institutional frameworks and national legislation" (operational objective 1.1.2).

In the face of the rapid growth of domestic markets that are largely fed by informal harvesting, it is now a priority for COMIFAC forest nations to promote a tax incentive system to simultaneously advance the development goals of SMEs in the timber sector on the one hand, and foster sustainable management of forest resources on the other hand.

The adoption of a tax incentive system is crucial to formalizing the functioning of supply chains for domestic markets and ensuring that these markets grow in line with the Congo Basin countries' socio-economic development and sustainable management objectives.

Stream 1 recommends that the COMIFAC Secretariat General conduct, with the support of its international partners, a feasibility study on the adoption of such tax incentives in the Congo Basin forest countries, and that the findings of this feasibility study be considered at a technical validation session during the next CBFP Meeting of Parties.

Translate Nationally Determined Contributions and other development and climate strategies into actionable investment plans.

Foster collaboration among ministries, civil society, private sector, and MDBs.

Attract significant co-investment from both public and private sectors.

### **Stream 2: Biodiversity and wildlife**

In order to tackle illegal wildlife trafficking and its impact on the security and stability of the Congo Basin countries, the CBFP aims, based on the COMIFAC Convergence Plan, to facilitate cooperation towards the implementation of the following four recommendations:

#### **Recommendation 1. With respect to the economy**

Establish efficient governance models to improve protected area management through partnerships that ensure long-term financing, create adequate conditions for effective law enforcement, and help strengthen security at the local, national and transnational levels, and thereby foster sustainable economic growth.

#### **Recommendation 2. With respect to laws and regulations**

Conduct country-level assessments of judiciary systems including both the national and international legal frameworks, international judicial cooperation and institutional capacities with a view to developing standardized judicial tracking and monitoring systems to combat environmental crime-related corruption.

#### **Recommendation 3. With respect to security**

Create a national and transnational multi-stakeholder platform to ensure the safety of people and wildlife and foster effective cooperation between conservation agencies and security and defense services on the one hand, and with the partners on the other hand in order to establish a model that takes into account conservation - security and local communities.

#### **Recommendation 4.**

Urgently analyse the current strengths and opportunities to build a green value or green economy based business model in the Congo Basin. This would entail leveraging all the available information and studies on both the knowledge of local communities and already obvious knowledge of the value of biodiversity, and also providing fact-based information on the issue to decision-makers in ECCAS and member countries in a joint effort to integrate a holistic sectoral dimension of biodiversity in economic planning. All active partners of the Congo Basin are called upon to support this initiative by collecting data within their respective operational landscapes and from other existing sources as well.

OFAC has a key role to play here in organizing a standardized data management framework for this purpose to help the partners assemble the appropriate socio-economic data and thus enable their analysis. A first compelling report on the current situation should be presented at the 18th Meeting of CBFP Parties.

#### ***Stream 3. Climate Change: Mitigation and Adaptation***

**Recommendation 1:** COMIFAC should develop sub-regional projects and programs with national components, including the following pressing issues:

- Develop sub-regional readiness projects to be submitted for funding to the GCF using existing sub-regional project resources, UNFCCC-led mechanisms or other mechanisms;
- Develop bankable sub-regional mitigation micro, small, medium or large-sized projects to be submitted for funding to the GCF, GEF, FA, LDCF and other regional funds and initiatives using existing sub-regional project resources, UNFCCC-led mechanisms or other mechanisms;
- Develop bankable sub-regional micro, small, medium or large-sized emissions reduction projects to facilitate ownership of the process at the national and regional levels, to be submitted for funding to the GCF, GEF, FA, LDCF and other regional funds and initiatives using existing sub-regional project resources, UNFCCC-led mechanisms or other mechanisms;
- Regarding the central basin peatlands that were recently discovered in the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo, there is an urgent need to develop a cross-border action plan using an integrated and

multisectoral approach to guide all stakeholders and chart a forward-looking and innovative path towards sustainable development for these peatlands in line with the investment plans of the countries concerned.

**Recommendation 2.** The Central African countries should promptly launch the revision of their CDNs which are due in 2020. Below are the next steps in the revision process:

- Mobilizing multifaceted support (partners and all stakeholders) to support COMIFAC/ECCAS member states:
- Supporting countries in reviewing and implementing CDNs with multi-stakeholder participation, including the private sector, civil society, indigenous peoples, women and youths, in line with the subregional action plan on the Paris Agreement adopted by the Council of Ministers in May 2016 in Kinshasa. ;
- Special attention will be given to mobilizing the necessary financial and technical resources for relevant national, subregional, or international institutions to make the process inclusive and effective, leading to credible, realistic and ambitious scenarios that contribute to the national development vision;
- Collaboration between countries of the subregion and subregional institutions (especially with technical support from OFAC) and relevant international institutions in collecting, analyzing, organizing and validating data in a transparent manner;
- Strengthening exchanges and sharing best practices and lessons learned between the countries in the subregion and beyond.

**Recommendation 3.** The Central African countries should take proactive steps to plan, access, use and effectively monitor climate finance, with the next steps being:

- The establishment by COMIFAC/ECCAS Member States of a more business-friendly environment especially in the framework of the GCF and other climate change financing mechanisms;
- Improving climate finance governance at all levels by identifying the most relevant and adequate architectures in each country;

- Strengthening dialogue within and between countries to discuss institutional and sectoral practices with a view to identifying best practices;
- Engaging the private sector in financing climate-compatible investments. This would involve identifying relevant support mechanisms to engage the private sector;
- Training on the one hand of a coalition of members within the CBFP to advocate with the UNFCCC COP and other financial mechanisms for the establishment of geographical equity in the distribution of climate resources and, on the other hand, to advocate for increased representation of Central African countries within the governance structures of financing mechanisms;
- Strengthening coordination of actions to ensure synergy and transparency across various mechanisms and initiatives

**Recommendation 4.** CBFP Parties urged the CBFP Facilitation to:

- Facilitate ownership of this process by all CBFP parties at the national and regional levels by disseminating all documents and communication on the NDCs and also, developing concept notes in order to access funding.
- Call on CBFP partners wishing to make inputs to the 2019 annual priorities, to start working forthwith on a draft concept note and proposed climate change activities with reference to NDCs and Climate Finance, to be submitted at the next CBFP Council for adoption at the 2018 CBFP Plenary.
- Thus, the Parties will help accelerate and enhance coordinated implementation of NDCs in Central Africa and fact-track improved access for Central Africa to climate finance mechanisms in order to foster sustainable investment in the Congo Basin and strengthen its influence in funding mechanisms.

The meeting gathered around 450 participants from countries of the Congo Basin, donors, international organizations, civil society organisations, academic and research institutions and the private sector.

The opening ceremony was graced by His Excellency Philip Ngwese Ngole, Minister of Forests and Wildlife of Cameroon, accompanied by Her Excellency Mrs. Rosalie Matondo, Minister of Forestry and Sustainable Development of the

Republic of Congo, His Excellency Mr Moukove Lissane Lambert, Minister of Water and Forests of the Central African Republic, His excellency Mr Jean Baptiste Habyarimana, Ambassador of Rwanda to the Republic of Congo and to Cameroon, representing the COMIFAC President in Office, Mrs. Marie Thérèse Chantal Mfoula, ECCAS Deputy General Secretary, Head of the Department of Physical Integration, Economic and Monetary Affairs (DIPEM), Mrs. Chantal Marijnissen, Head of Unit for Environment, Natural Resources and Water, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, European Commission, representing the EU.

A keynote address was delivered by Mr Anders Henriksson, European Union Facilitator of CBFP.

The meeting opened with a political segment consisting of meetings of the CBFP Colleges and the third meeting of the CBFP Council. This segment was followed by a technical segment, consisting of three thematic streams. The meeting concluded with a high-level a plenary session.

There was also an Exhibition Space and a number of related side-events.

Douala (Cameroon), 27 October, 2017

Participants