

Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP)

Priorities for 2018

Proposals of the EU facilitation

Context

Strengthening the cooperation between CBFP partners is considered a priority by all members of the Partnership. During the 2nd CBFP Council meeting, held at Libreville on 16 May 2017, the Facilitator indicated that one way of promoting such reinforcement could be to identify, on the basis of the list of medium term priorities⁽¹⁾, one or more annual priorities. The identified priorities could form the basis for specific programs of action (workshops, conferences, joint publications etc.) organized by one or several interested CBFP members and open to the participation of all members willing to contribute.

Such annual priorities and their corresponding programs of action could be decided during one MOP with a view to produce results to be presented at the subsequent MOP. Such an approach could contribute to raising the partnership's profile at international level and fostering a greater continuity of activities within the partnership between successive MOPs.

Having received a positive response to this idea by the members of the CBFP Council, the Facilitator announced that the EU Facilitation would prepare a concept note on annual CBFP priorities for discussion at the next Council meeting, including a pilot proposal covering one or two priorities for the period between the 2017 MOP and the 2018 MOP ⁽²⁾.

The present document constitutes the concept note announced by the Facilitator.

1() See document 1 in Annex.

2 () The Facilitator further announced that, should the approach be confirmed and the proposed annual priorities adopted during the 2017 MOP, the EU Facilitation would take the lead in identifying, for each of the selected pilot priorities, one or several interested CBFP partners, which would have the technical capacities and human resources required to manage exchanges and discussions among all interested partners (possibly through workshops) and to produce a set of relevant results in time for the 18th MOP.

1st proposal:

Strengthening the security dimension of wildlife management

During the process of validating the medium-term priorities at the 2nd CBFP Council meeting (Libreville, 16 May 2017), priorities no.9 ⁽³⁾ and no.11 ⁽⁴⁾ were highlighted as key priorities for the United States and the EU. The EU announced the recent launch, alongside ECOFAC VI, of a new regional anti-poaching and anti-trafficking initiative to be managed by UNODC (United Nations Office against Drugs and Crime) and integrated in a capacity-building program for peace and security in the sub-region (PARRCIC). Combating poaching is also a key priority for the United States, with a focus on the strengthening of national anti-poaching capacities.

As regards the EU, the anti-poaching and anti-trafficking efforts carried out in Central Africa are part of a global commitment reflected in the EU Action Plan against Wildlife Trafficking (COM (2016) 87 final). The Action Plan underlines that “to halt the devastating impact of wildlife crime on ecosystems and the economy, a decisive and comprehensive response is needed”. The Action Plan, covering the period 2016-2020, specifically aims to “strengthen the EU’s role in the fight against these illegal activities globally, through 32 measures divided into three priority areas: prevention, enforcement and cooperation” (foreword, page 5) ⁽⁵⁾.

The concerns over these issues are shared at the highest levels of government in the countries of the Congo Basin. In the recent N'Djamena declaration on the security of natural resources, man/wildlife conflict and other land use related conflicts in Central Africa (Ndjamena, 27 July 2017), the ECCAS Ministers effectively pledged to:

- strengthen dialogue at the political, strategic and operational levels between the States and other stakeholders in implementing policy, institutional, legal and participatory tools to help develop and promote eco-security (point no. 2)
- support the project to set up Special Eco-Security units in the 11 (eleven) ECCAS Member States and integrate these in existing Defense and Security systems (point no. 4)
- support the establishment of observatories on eco-security, man/wildlife conflict and other land use related conflicts (point no. 6)
- request the ECCAS General Secretariat to promptly conduct feasibility studies on development programs relating to the security of natural resources in Central Africa (point no. 15) ⁽⁶⁾

These combined commitments by several key CBFP partners present a unique opportunity to establish, in the period between the 17th MOP and the 18th MOP, a specific program of action aimed at “strengthening the security dimension of wildlife management”.

3 ()Priority no. 9: Promote the enforcement of international, regional and national laws and regulations in support of good governance

4 ()Priority no. 11: Promote trans-boundary/landscape approaches and the integration of security concerns in the gazetting and management of protected areas and forests concessions, notably harmonized anti-poaching activities in the most vulnerable border areas, such as Great Virunga, Garamba-Chinko, TNS, TRIDOM etc.

5 () See http://ec.europa.eu/environment/cites/pdf/WAP_FR_WEB.PDF.

6 () See <http://pfb-cbfp.org/actualites/items/Declaration-MinistreCEEAC.html>

A proposal for a specific program of action will be presented at the 3rd meeting of the CBFP Council to be held in Douala on 24 October during the 17th MOP (24-27 October 2017).

2nd proposal:

Building a database to monitor the implementation and results of activities carried out by CBFP partners

“State of the Forest”, the biennial publication of OFAC, is widely recognized, both in scientific and academic circles, as a reference for the understanding and appreciation of the challenges of conserving and sustainably manage the Congo Basin forests. However, this publication is not designed to monitor in practice the implementation of conservation and sustainable management efforts and activities conducted at field-level by the numerous stakeholders involved (public authorities, development cooperation agencies, NGOs and the private sector).

The information gap in the monitoring of partners' field-level activities, which impedes adequate consultation and coordination among partners and effective programming, has long been acknowledged by all CBFP partners. This is clearly reflected in the list of medium-term priorities, which highlights the need to rapidly adopt at the CBFP level a dedicated strategy to improve the situation:

- Priority No. 6 (a): Support coordination platforms and thematic exchange among partners involved in implementation of activities, and more specifically develop a database of the interventions of CBFP technical and financial partners, organized on the basis of the main elements of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan;
- Priority No. 4: Promote information systems and other systems to support political decision-making in the region and improve the way in which relevant analyses and information are made available to decision-makers and are transformed into policies and the implementation of decisions

The EU Facilitation considers that for the sake of the credibility and effectiveness of CBFP, there is an urgent need to develop a dedicated tool to support the monitoring and programming of field activities of CBFP partners.

In this respect, the launch of the regional project under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) to support the conservation of the biodiversity and fragile ecosystems of Central Africa (2017-2021) provides an opportunity. This project aims notably to support “the operationalisation of the Observatory of Central African Forests (OFAC) as an instrument for supporting decision-making by the political leaders of the region, as well as a tool for the follow-up and guidance of donor strategies”. This operationalisation of OFAC constitutes a key cross-cutting activity of the 11th EDF.

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