

## **Some of the contributions of the Congo Basin PARTNERSHIP to agenda 21 via the Comifac convergence plan.**

As the CBFP Facilitator, I am pleased to be given this opportunity to address this assembly on a topic that has never been part of studies and communications internationally except during regular sessions of the CBFP partners' meetings.

As many of you already know, the CBFP was created in Johannesburg in 2002 during the WSSD held 10 years after the Rio conventions were adopted. It was created as a UN type 2 organisation, i.e. an informal, non binding, in support of an intergovernmental body which in the case of CBFP is COMIFAC.

The CBFP started with USA assuming the partnership facilitating role and the enrolment of some 10 donor countries, the 10 COMIFAC member States, some multilaterals and a few large NGOs. Today the CBFP is made of 66 members distributed along the following groups :

10 COMIFAC States, 10 donor-partner countries, 12 multilaterals, 22 NGOs and scientific bodies and 11 private organisations.

All these members have accepted the CBFP cooperation framework through which they commit themselves to promote and commit themselves to respect the cooperation principles resulting from the Brazzaville Head of States meeting. These principles are defined in the COMIFAC convergence plan which can be described as a compendium of 10 sustainable forest management strategic concepts and principles. The objective of the partners of the CBFP is to improve the effectiveness of technical and financial contributions to the sustainable management of forest ecosystems and alleviation of poverty in the COMIFAC member States. The CBFP is run by a partner country on a voluntary basis with a rotation every two years among partners.

Coming back to the contribution of the CBFP to the agenda 21, we describe the contributions that took place under each period of two years since its inception. Starting in 2002, the USA facilitated the CBFP for two years during which the basis of this partnership were defined and implemented. A strong effort was dedicated to develop the landscape approach to plan and implement program in the Congo Basin. Today this approach is adopted in all COMIFAC member states. An example of this is the African Model Forest Network which bases its action on the landscape to assist the stakeholders in programming and implementing their activities in participation with the populations living from forest resources. This organisation, the RAFM, is now a member of the CBFP.

From 2005 to 2007, France took over from the USA. During their facilitation, the partners joined efforts to publish for the first time the Congo Basin State of Forests, one of the few reliable references to study and implement sustainable forest management. The Congo Basin State of Forests is published every second years since. During those years, a new web site was created for the CBFP and strong efforts were made to structure the training and capacity building network, called RIFFEAC. Many training activities at all leve, university, technical, vocational, on the job training are now better coordinated. But the tremendous needs to support capacity building require more support from all parties.

In 2007, Germany accepted to lead the CBFP taking over from France. Germany contributed greatly with Comifac and the partners to give more visibility to the Congo Basin States in the international fora mainly the fora related to the Rio conventions and recently, ECOSOC has accredited COMIFAC to the Rio +20 convention as an intergovernmental organisation. A dialog was engaged between COMIFAC and China on sustainable forest management and important progress were made to provide a legal and institutional framework to implement the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements with EU. Forest certification made important progress. Today, more than 7 millions ha of forest is under forest management plans and close to 6 millions ha . are certified FSC. PEFC is also making progress in the region.

In 2010, after Germany, Canada took the lead. Since the CBFP approach has been in favor of a strengthened COMIFAC in its capacity to build harmony and coordination in forest policy orientation in and among the member States of COMIFAC. Support and advocacy were provided for the COMIFAC and the member States to seize the new opportunities such as the REDD+ initiative, the Congo Basin Forest Fund, the trends towards a green economy and the increasing interest worldwide for the resource potential of the COMIFAC member States. As a result, each week the CBFP is solicited by organizations requesting membership. Criteria are strengthened in order to screen new members and retain only active members. CBFP and COMIFAC are both at a crossroad and the way forward is in the hands of the members of the partnership showing the determination to help building a sustainable and management of the forest ecosystems of the Congo Basin.

I conclude this short presentation with a few words for late Prof. Wangari Mathaai, Noble prize and special Ambassador for the Congo Basin Forest . She said : ' For me, one of the major reasons to move beyond just the planting of trees was that I have a tendency to look at the causes of the problems. We often preoccupy ourselves with the symptoms, whereas if we went to the root cause of the problems, we would be able to overcome the problems once and for all.' And she adds : ' I am working to make sure we don't only protect the environment, we also improve governance.'

Gaston Grenier, Rio+20, June 17 2012.