

**International Conservation Caucus
Bi-cameral Hearing on the Status of and Future Prospects for the
Congo Basin Forest Partnership**

**Washington D.C., September 29, 2009
Oral statement of Hans Schipulle, Facilitator CBFP**

I. Evolution of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP)

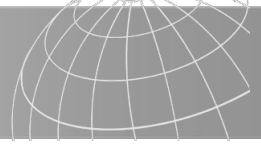
Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for giving me the floor.

I'm Hans Schipulle, Deputy Director General in the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and currently serving – during the German CBFP facilitation period – as coordinator of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership.

It is a great honor for me to having been invited to testify at this Hearing on behalf of the CBFP.

While others will speak about the state of the Congo Basin forests and the challenges to preserve the ecologic, economic and social function of the Central African ecosystems for this and future generations, I will concentrate my statement on CBFP's evolution over the last 8 years, on its relation to the Central African Forest Commission / COMIFAC, on its accomplishments and its perspectives.

The Congo Basin Forest Partnership was **launched by the United States** in cooperation with South Africa at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg as one of more than a hundred initiatives where public and private stakeholders wanted to demonstrate how sustainable development would concretely work in different sectors. For many of them it was a signal of frustration with all the lengthy negotiations over language for yet another UN-resolution or action program. They forged coalitions of the willing who wanted to see “action now!” in the spirit of the Rio Agenda 21.



It was the merit of the pragmatic approach of the United States – and if I’m not mistaken on the initiative of the Conservation Caucus – which led Secretary Colin Powell to take the lead in launching this partnership to promote the conservation and sustainable management of the Congo Basin’s forest ecosystems.

Today it constitutes **a network of 51 members**: the 10 governments of the Central African Forest Commission COMIFAC, 11 other governmental members (USA, France, Germany – to begin with the members having acted as CBFP’s steering facilitation – Belgium, Canada, European Commission, Japan, Netherlands, Spain and the UK), 12 International Organizations, 13 NGO’s and research institutions and 5 members from the private sector or representing the private sector. An updated list of the members is always available on CBFP’s website www.cbfp.org.

At their first meeting in Paris in 2003, CBFP members officially agreed to align their support, to share information and to better harmonize their activities. The principles of the partnership were set out in a **Cooperation Framework**. The overall objective of the partnership has been specified as (quote) “to enhance the effectiveness of the partners’ interventions in favor of conservation and sustainable management of forest ecosystems, economic growth and poverty reduction in the countries of Central Africa”. Given its emphasis on effectiveness and the development of synergies between on-going or future projects, the CBFP’s sustainability principles anticipated the resolutions for good international cooperation endorsed in 2005 by the OECD Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

The CBFP members decided to operate as a network without a secretarial structure. In order to ensure its function of a platform for dialogue and exchange, one member – on a rotation basis – is asked to serve as a coordinator, or as we call it more exactly: Facilitator. At the beginning of a new facilitation phase members agree on a road map with priority areas of action. It is the responsibility of the facilitating member to set up internal and external communication tools and to offer opportunities for exchange. Twice a year the facilitation holds a meeting of the Regional Consultative Committee and once every two years organizes the Plenary Assembly. Communication tools like the open-access website, an info-bulletin and personal contacts between members’



focal points add up to a feeling of togetherness that leads to trustful working relationships. Being united for a common objective and communicating on the progress achieved generates motivation to engage in further cooperation.

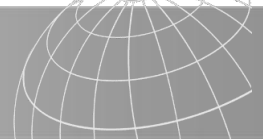
II. The COMIFAC Regional Strategy as a conceptual framework

However, the Partnership would be an empty shell without the conceptual framework and the operational reference which is being provided by the COMIFAC Regional Strategy for sustainable forest management and the orientation of this intergovernmental decision-making institution. In their **1999 Yaoundé Declaration**, Central African Heads of States proclaimed their (quote) “*commitment to the principle of biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of the forest ecosystems of Central Africa*”, as well as “*their peoples’ right to be able to count on the forest resources to support their endeavor for economic and social development*”.

(COMIFAC is governed by the Council of Ministers of the ten Central African States that make up the Congo River watershed: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tomé and Príncipe).

The US in its role as the first CBFP Facilitation encouraged other CBFP members to demonstrate that concerted action in the Congo Basin was feasible without having to create new multilateral organizations likely to jeopardize an independent regional policy process, that the **COMIFAC Regional Strategy** may and must be respected as a **reference framework** for donor activities and that donor coordination integrating a large number of actors is necessary.

The following facilitating members (France 2005-2007 and Germany 2008-2010) adopted the same careful steering approach in order to ensure continuous regional ownership and to create possibilities for other actors from the international and regional community to contribute to specific topics. One example is the joint initiative to **produce objective information** on the condition and extent of the Congo Basin forest ecosystems. A first ground-breaking report, based on facts and figures was put together in 2005 with CARPE partners from NGO and scientific institutions. Since then two comprehensive publications on the “State of the Congo Basin Forest” were published by CBFP in 2007 and very recently in 2009 with the support of the



scientific community within and outside the region – a unique effort which doesn't exist in the two other big tropical forest regions.

Today, CBFP with its accumulated experience in harmonizing regional initiatives is able to offer **guidance for effective use and governance of additional finance** made available by the international community to the Congo Basin. COMIFAC, as strengthened by CBFP's members support, can help to orient and monitor allocation of new funds provided e.g. by World Bank, African Development Bank or the UK/Norway sponsored Congo Basin Forest Fund. As the international community develops innovative financing mechanisms, more important funding is likely to be mobilized. The Forest Carbon Partnership Fund, UN-REDD program and allocations of the Global Environment Facility are setting the path. However, effective use heavily depends on the concerned countries' political ownership and determination to enforce forest protection through appropriate legal frameworks and the establishment of positive incentives for developing new technologies or alternative revenue sources.

III. CBFP accomplishments

The accomplishments of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership highly depend on the single members' initiatives. But having been harmonized and aligned due to CBFP's coordination and communication efforts, their impact on **reconciling the integrity of ecosystems with human use and development** constitute a clear value added. The successful CARPE Landscape approach has become a model on how to jointly define priorities for conservation action on a solid scientific basis and taking into account the vital interests of concerned stakeholders. With this perspective CBFP members advise Central African states in advancing credible forest sector reforms; support partner countries in promoting legal timber harvesting in production forests; provide direct support to the development of a regional forest certification (FSC) standard; and stand up against a general blacklisting of timber harvested in the Congo Basin region. They inform the international community about the potential and progress made in sustainable forest management which could evolve into a blueprint for measures to be undertaken in introducing forests into a future climate change mitigation regime (REDD).



CBFP attracts new partners to open up for cooperation. One example is the dialogue with Chinese logging companies, Chinese State Forest Administration and other related Ministries. After having conducted extensive research on Chinese stakeholders' perception in China, and consulted other CBFP members with Chinese-African programs, the German facilitation at the last Regional Consultative Committee (May 2009) proposed a framework to **foster dialogue between China and Central Africa** that should combine political agreements and technical cooperation. Two workshops on EU-FLEGT are under preparation, and COMIFAC has been counseled on how to include the forest chapter into the Forum on Chinese-African Cooperation (FOCAC).

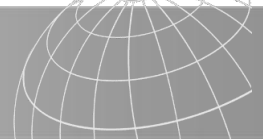
CBFP defends balanced regional **representation in international negotiations** in helping COMIFAC to build up political and technical capacity for the negotiations in UN environment treaties concerning REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), APA-ABS (Access-and-Benefit Sharing) and PASR-LDC (regional strategy to fight against desertification).

And finally, CBFP achieves spill-over effects for regional cooperation and security: the participatory instruments developed by CBFP members to strengthen the voices of regional civil-society and parliamentary networks in forest management issues, mostly through CEFDHAC, have contributed to a **democratic learning process in a conflict-ridden region**.

IV. Future perspectives and recommendations for improved effectiveness

Mr.Chairman, you asked for **Future perspectives and recommendations for improved effectiveness** of CBFP. Let me mention four points:

- CBFP will continue to play its **role as a mediator**, capable of engaging in constructive discussion with a large number of actors. It will embrace critical stakeholders whose overambitious campaigns threaten to stop positive reform processes (such as the dialogue on the review of forest concession titles in DRC in March 2009) and will persist in its outreaching activities to generate consensus on the best approaches to promote sustainable forest use and protection in the Congo Basin.
- CBFP will emphasize **regional institutional stability and capacity** as the key for sustaining the impacts of its combined efforts. COMIFAC has received a unique mandate and needs to stay operational i.e. well funded and



politically supported by its member states, in order to be able to serve as a model institution for other regions.

- CBFP recommends capitalizing on its experiences acquired with the unique institutional set-up: strengthening and improving effectiveness of a regional organization through the support of an international partnership. In its capacity to promote good governance and cooperation, the **Congo Basin institutional acquis could develop into a blue-print** that is likely to facilitate implementation of new mechanisms, such as REDD.
- Large international NGOs that work with local affiliated partner structures and the regional networks operating through CEFDHAC are vital for enriching CBFP's internal dialogue. CBFP members will undertake further efforts to **enhance the participation and visibility of local partners** inside and outside the Partnership.

The German Facilitation of CBFP recommends partners, including the United States, to continue with an integrative approach of combining support to the COMIFAC institutional setup (preferably through the Yaoundé based support office) with the strengthening of national structures allowing a productive networking throughout the region. This would also allow a new Facilitation team to acquire sufficient information and knowledge to perform its function. As previous teams it stands ready to **transfer experience to the new Facilitation** which should be designated by CBFP members during the next plenary meeting, on November 11 /12, 2009 in Yaoundé.

I hope, Mr. Chairman, that I was able to provide sufficient evidence not only for the US leadership in the past in support of the Congo Basin countries in managing their forest ecosystems, but also for the rationale to continue this engagement even more intensively in the future.

Thank you for your attention.