

Address by Mr Hans Schipulle, CBFP Facilitator,  
Workshop on the post-conversion process concerning logging titles  
in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Kinshasa, 4-6 March 2009

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Your Excellency, Mr Minister;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would first of all like to extend my sincerest thanks to the Minister of Environment, Nature Conservation and Tourism of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for having invited me to take part in this workshop on the implementation of the phases following the logging title conversion process undertaken by the country's Forestry Authority. By inviting us and all the stakeholders to this important event, the government is ensuring transparency in the management of this undertaking, which is highly commendable.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for their warm welcome and the great effort that they have put into making this workshop a success.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, a post-conflict country with the largest area of forest in the Congo Basin, is currently establishing the legal basis for sustainable forest management

through a process involving the conversion of old logging titles, participatory zoning following extensive consultation with local and indigenous peoples and continued efforts to improve the main protected areas. These are just a few of the many, equally important, points included in the roadmap. The procedure followed throughout this conversion operation is acknowledged by all the stakeholders as being transparent and worthy of a true rule-of-law state.

On behalf of the members of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), I would like to congratulate the government on the strong political will that it has displayed and the diplomacy with which the process has been implemented.

Sustainable forest management, to which this country is firmly committed, is embodied in its current forest policy, which, among other things, seeks to:

- ensure that the forest sector makes a significant contribution to the national economy as a whole
- improve the quality of life and standard of living of local populations
- ensure the optimal realisation of environmental services (regulation of greenhouse gases and climate change, conservation of biodiversity and water recycling).

Although it is clear that the Democratic Republic of the Congo still has some way to go before it fully implements all the reforms defined by the government for this sector, it is important, at this point, to recognise the significance of the phase that has already been completed, which is a fundamental part of the sustainable forest resource management process, as recommended in the Yaoundé Declaration. In this declaration, the Central African countries showed their firm commitment to ensuring that indigenous peoples are more closely involved in the management of forest resources and that part of the revenues are used for local development.

Completion of the phase that paves the way for forest governance through the allocation of managed forest concessions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is all the more commendable since, as the CBFP partners can all observe today, it is thanks to forest certification, an essential management tool created in accordance with the regulations established in the forest codes, that progress in biodiversity protection, including high conservation value areas, observance of the regulations and legislation in force, poverty reduction and respect for the rights of indigenous peoples can be measured in the subregion. Wildlife is also more effectively protected in certified forest concessions than in any other kind of managed area, including protected areas, most of which are still

characterised by an almost total lack of control as a result of insufficient public resources.

As the Democratic Republic of the Congo makes a grand entrance on the forest management scene, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership is delighted with the major progress achieved in the drive for sustainable forest management in Central Africa since the Yaoundé Summit in 1999. Advances have been made with regard to the implementation of land use management, with almost 11 million hectares of forest land operating under management plans in the subregion. In addition, almost 3.5 million hectares of forest land in the Congo Basin are now certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which applies internationally recognised performance standards, and this figure could reach 10 million by 2012. The Congo Basin forest has the lowest level of deforestation and negligible rates of conversion into industrial logging operations, compared with the planet's other two tropical forests (the Amazon and South-East Asia). All these results have been achieved thanks to a concerted effort by governments, the private sector, civil society and international technical and financial partners.

In view of this overall positive trend, highlighted in the *State of the Forest Report 2006*, the CBFP is calling on all willing partners to provide crucial assistance to the countries in the subregion, the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular, for the

implementation of their Convergence Plan, especially with regard to the implementation of management practices in production forests to promote poverty reduction, respect for the rights of indigenous peoples and the conservation of large mammal populations and plant and animal biodiversity habitats.

The CBFP partners do not underestimate the efforts still required in the subregion to improve forest governance, ensure more effective coordination of anti-poaching strategies and efforts and improve natural resource management. However, the CBFP partners believe that any initiative that would result in a general suspension of sustainable industrial logging operations in the Congo Basin or affect timber exports would be counterproductive and penalise the countries and logging companies in the subregion who have put a great deal of effort into managing forest resources sustainably. Such an initiative would, in fact, achieve the opposite effect of encouraging widespread illegal logging.

For the CBFP, sustainable forest management for the production of timber and new approaches involving communal and community forests and international carbon markets (process for reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation in developing countries – REDD), represent opportunities that should be realised in order to better develop the Congo Basin forest ecosystems and contribute to their conservation. The first step, then, is to combine

these various forms of management, which are not mutually exclusive, so that the forest sector can make a greater contribution to development in the subregion. It is important that all the actors involved contribute to this process of change by providing the necessary support, without which success cannot be guaranteed. The CBFP knows that it can count on the full understanding of all the actors.

### **Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen**

I reaffirm the willingness of the partners to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in implementing its forest sector reform programme and hope that our work will be productive and successful.

Long live international cooperation!

Thank you for your kind attention.