

**Report of the sixth meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee/RAC of the Congo
Basin Forests Partnership
Brazzaville – 30 and 31 October 2008**

Table of contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Opening ceremony	3
3. Progress of the report on the «2008 Situation of Forests»	4
4. Industrial logging and sustainable forest management	5
5. Multilateral and international financing initiatives	6
6. Support to COMIFAC and sub-regional partners	8
6.1 Salient points of the Council of Minister's meetings in September/ October 2008	8
6.2 Support programme of the United States to COMIFAC	9
6.3 Support Programme of the Franco-German Bureau (FGB) to the ES/COMIFAC	10
6.4 CEFDHAC Reforms	12
6.5 CBFP activities within the framework of major conventions on forests and the environment – the support and role of COMIFAC working groups	13
6.5.1 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	13
6.5.2 Convention on Climate Change	14
6.5.3 Master Agreement on the Fight against Desertification	15
6.5.4 Other support programmes at COMIFAC	15
7. Forest Governance in Central Africa	15
7.1 Dialogue with Asian operators of the forest sectors	15
7.2 Support to the certification of production forest concessions	16
7.3 Item on the negotiation of VPA's with the European Union	17
8. Progress Report on the Evaluation of the Plan of Operations of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan (POPC)	18
9. Working Schedule of the CBFP Facilitation (2008 – 2009)	18
9.1 Institutional Strengthening of the ES and partner institutions	18
9.2 Institutional Strengthening of the CBFP	18
9.3 Strengthening forest governance and master conditions	19
9.4 Key international conventions and REDD processes	19
9.5 Innovative financial mechanisms	19

9.6	Next plenary meeting of the RAC	19
10.	Presenting the CBFP communication strategy and configuration of its Website	20
11.	Conclusions of the RAC meeting	20

1. Introduction

The sixth meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC) of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership held in Brazzaville from 30 to 31 October 2008, under the chairmanship of Mr. Hans SCHIPULLE, CBFP Facilitator and in the presence, at the official opening ceremony of 31 October 2008, of Mr. Henri Djombo, Minister of Forest Economics of Congo, the host country of this meeting and Madam Yvonne Mboissona, Minister of Water, Forests, Hunting, Fisheries and Environment of the Central African Republic, current Chair of COMIFAC.

Participants were also very glad to receive, on 30 October 2008, Madam Wangari Maathai, Nobel Prize Winner for Peace and Honorary Ambassador of the Congo Basin Forests, who expressed satisfaction of the progress made in the conservation and sustainable management of Congo Basin forests since the 2nd Central African Heads of State Summit held in Brazzaville in 2005. After recalling the current situation of the funds of the Congo Basin Forests, which stand at 210 million dollars, she made it a point of duty to thank the British and Norwegians who made contributions to raise that amount and urged African States to follow suit. Finally, she said that Congo Basin Forests have such a key role to play in climate change that it is necessary to continue to protect them through conservation and sustainable management activities.

In attendance at the Brazzaville meeting were 72 participants representing the CBFP members and the following groups of stakeholders: ADB, COMIFAC, WWF, ADIE, UNESCO, USA/CARPE, OFAC/FORAF, Germany, France, Executive Secretariat of COMIFAC, IUCN, World Bank, Central African Network of Parliamentarians (REPAR), Local and Indigenous Peoples' Network of Central Africa (REPALEAC), DR Congo, European Union, AWF, CAR, ICRAF, FAO, GEF, RAPAC (Central African Network of Protected Areas), WCS, Cameroon, SNV, WCS, OCFSA, Belgium, Congo, UNEP, Global Mechanism, CIRAD, COMIFAC working groups (GT/BAC, GT/Climate, GT/LCD). See the attendance sheet in annex 1.

Just like that of Bangui in March 2008, the Brazzaville meeting was mainly an information, communication and exchange meeting between partners. But participants also discussed some matters relating to forest management such as defining the role of industrial logging in sustainable management, certification of concessions, monitoring systems and the promotion of legal timber trade through voluntary partnership agreements between the countries of the region and the European Union.

See the agenda of the sixth meeting of the RAC in annex 2 of this report.

2. Opening ceremony

Due to the holding in Brazzaville of the 6th World Forum on Sustainable Development, the official opening ceremony of the RAC meeting took place on the second day.

In his introductory remarks, Mr. **Hans Schipulle** welcomed all the participants to the Brazzaville meeting and expressed his delight about the presence at this meeting of Honourable **Wangari Maathai**, Honorary Ambassador for the Forest Ecosystems of the Congo Basin, and Ministers **Yvonne Mboissona** and **Henri Djombo**. He used the opportunity to recall that the six COMIFAC member countries are equally full members of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and that as such, their representatives did not need specific invitations to attend CBFP meeting. For Mr. Schipulle, the regular frequency of the CBFP meetings is a clear indication of the vitality of the CBFP in an evolving Congo Basin, with the current events taking place in Brazzaville being the most eloquent testimonies. After indicating the need for COMIFAC to be provided with technical and financial means that reflect its missions, Mr Schipulle commended the countries of Central Africa which have already operationalised the autonomous funding mechanism expected to cover the operational costs of its execution structures. He also saluted the fact that new partners had joined the partnership and the good collaboration climate that now exists between Congo Basin countries and the partners. To end his remarks, he reassured the new Chair and the

Executive Secretariat of COMIFAC of the availability of partners to support them in the implementation of the Yaounde Declaration.

For Mr. **Henri Djombo**, Minister of Forest Economics of Congo, who took the floor after Mr. Schipulle, the Central African sub-region should draw lessons from the World Forum on Sustainable Development taking place in Brazzaville and whose decisions, resolutions and recommendations will have a far-reaching influence on its future actions under COMIFAC. He then noted that the CBFP Regional Advisory Committee meeting was holding after an extraordinary meeting of the COMIFAC Council of Ministers which set the record straight especially by appointing a new team to run the Executive Secretariat. To him, the main problem of the COMIFAC convergence plan, which should pay greater attention to the needs of new members, is that of funds, the amount of which as announced in 2005 is already too small. To remedy the situation, States will have to effectively pay their contributions, the contributions of partners should be more substantial and a Congo Basin Fund should be established. All the actions undertaken in recent days show a strong image of the Congo Basin which is gradually becoming a model for other regions. But for this model to be dependable, it is necessary for all the players to resolutely put hands on deck.

In this speech, H.E. Madam **Yvonne Mboissona**, Minister of Water, Forests, Hunting, Fisheries and the Environment of the Central African Republic, current Chair of COMIFAC, said that the massive presence at this meeting of partners, members or not, of the CBFP is a pointer to the interest shown in issues of the conservation and sustainable management of Congo Basin forests. By deciding to harmonise their forest policies and to attach more importance to good governance in this sector, countries of the COMIFAC region have demonstrated that they are aware of the need for the conservation and sustainable management and use of forest and wildlife potentials for the socio-economic wellbeing of their populations. Madam Mboissona also called on partners to join the CBFP initiative in order to contribute to helping get the Central African region out of poverty and ensure that the Congo Basin forests play a role in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. The countries of Central Africa should thus also try to identify and come up with projects which could be included in the REDD process. In ending her speech, she expressed the wish that the quality and relevance of the proposals to emerge from this Regional Advisory Committee meeting should go a long way in laying the ground work for achieving the goals outlined in the COMIFAC convergence plan.

See annex 3 for the complete texts of Madam Mboissona's and Mr Schipulle's speeches.

3. Progress of the report on the «2008 Situation of Forests»

Mr. **Richard Eba'a Atyi** of the FORAF project, who gave a presentation on this item, recalled the expected outcome of this project (situational analysis or database on Central African forests, the natural and socio-economic environmental monitoring system, the putting in place of a regional observatory mechanism - OFAC), the indicators of these results with three follow-up themes (forest cover, forest exploitation and biodiversity conservation and enhancement) and three levels to be considered (regional level, national level and within management sites) in the preparation of the report on the 2008 situation of forests.

Data collection started in the six countries of sub-region in May 2008 with these countries forwarding completed and validated data collection sheets. The writing of the chapters on the regional summary and the country summary and the writing of cross-cutting chapters (payment of environmental services, water, biodiversity, institutional and carbon services, carbon stock and variation, fuel wood) have been finalised. The writing on the chapters on the CBFP landscape has also been completed. The remarks of the rereading Committee will be validated on 18 to 20 November 2008 in Kinshasa. In the sidelines of this validation workshop, a meeting of the Steering Committee of the Central African Forest Observatory (OFAC) will be held on 21 November 2008. The objective of the meeting will be to outline strategies, priorities and indicators for the Observatory and make recommendations ahead of its institutionalization.

Generally, the 2008 version of the report on the situation of forests differs from the 2006 version in that it contains two innovations:

- The drafting of the so-called cross-cutting chapters by expert consultants, mainly on climate change, knowledge of the carbon stock and the importance of wood as a source of energy in Central Africa;
- Monitoring the evolution of sustainable management in pilot sites on the FORAF website.

The total cost of the work on the 2008 situation of forests, including the validation workshop, stands at an estimated 270 000 Euros, while the announced and confirmed financial contributions stand at 275 000 Euros and are expected from: MAE-France (15 000 €), GTZ (85 000 €), RAC (140 000 €), USAID (10 000 €), FORAF (5 000 €), ECOFAC (20 000 €).

After the validation of the report, the timetable for its finalisation and publication is as follows: Finalisation of the report (December 2008), Formatting (January 2009), translation French-English-Spanish (February 2009), printing of the English and French versions (March 2009), dissemination (March 2009).

The discussions that followed the presentation hinged on:

- **Work between FORAF, ADIE and the COMIFAC Working Group on climate.** For the participants, a stronger ADIE (Intergovernmental Environmental Information Development Agency) will certainly have a key role to play in making the results of the FORAF project to have a long lasting effect and as such, it should be associated in the work of the situation of forests, since its current mission already allows it to cover all environment-related aspects, including the forest or green environment.

After noting that there is so far no formalised relationship between the working group on climate and the FORAF project, participants recommended that Focal Points of the Convention on climate change should take full advantage from the choice of FORAF to direct the subject matter of the cross-cutting chapters to topics relating to climate change to better buttress their arguments in ongoing negotiations on the climate.

- **Reliability of forest products data.** Mr. Eba'a Atyi made mention of the methodological difficulties in obtaining valid and dependable data while a big fraction of the forestry economy is found in the informal sector, which as its name indicates is hard to circumscribe. Participants therefore recognised the need for pilot studies to be conducted using simple methodologies for gathering information on the informal sector, NFTP's, fuel wood and bush meat. On this score, participants were reminded of some pilot studies that have been carried out in Cameroon, Gabon, DR Congo and in Congo Brazzaville which could help give reliable figures on these issues.

Participants appreciated the interest shown by the UNESCO representative to contribute financially to the 2008 edition of the report of the situation of forests, the offer made by the representatives of USAID/CARPE (Landscapes) and UNESCO (MAB & GRASP) to put their databanks, translation skills and their technical expertise on indicators on wildlife at the disposal of FORAF as this will make the report on the situation of Congo Basin forests even more credible at the international level.

- **Forest degradation and desertification.** It was recommended that, in preparing the 2008 report on the situation of forests, the FORAF project should take into consideration the phenomena of forest degradation and desertification which both contribute to climate change.

4. Industrial logging and sustainable forest management

From the keynote address delivered on this topic by Samuel Makon, CBFP Facilitator Delegate, it emerges that sustainable forest management is underpinned by forest management operations such as industrial logging. This sustainable management of forests in which the countries of the sub-region are engaged, is a process aimed at management objectives relating to continuous acquisition of needed forest products and services, without

having unacceptable social and environmental impacts, nor reducing the intrinsic value and the future utility potential of these forests. It is up to economic operators of the timber sector to set up a planned system of industrial logging, consistent with the forest and environmental standards established by the laws in force in the country concerned and the requirements of the international timber market and, this, in the strict application of the tried and tested reference frames of certification of sustainable management of tropical forests. Among these reference frames are the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council), which, for this purpose established principles and criteria compatible with those of the ITTO and makes it possible to certify that a forest is exploited in an exemplary way. To date, nearly 3.5 million hectares of forest concessions have been FSC certified in the Congo Basin and this figure could reach 10 million in 2012.

However, the public debate concerning the economic, social and ecological effects of industrial logging in tropical ecosystems, continues to be the subject of controversy, revealing at the very least contradictory positions: continuation of forest exploitation on the basis of management plans and according to tried and tested methods which are more suitable for the socio-ecological conditions or a complete cessation of the exploitation and use of tropical wood for industrial purposes by converting production concessions into conservation concessions. The DRC, a country of the COMIFAC region, is currently facing this dilemma of contradictory positions after a decision of the Government to transform nearly 30% of former forest titles into forest concession contracts.

The CBFP thus seeks to intensify dialogue among its partners, in order to get out of the foreseeable deadlock in international negotiations on forests. For this, it sets out to support the organization of a conciliation meeting in Kinshasa to discuss the matter and to which will be invited to attend all the actors of the forest sector, including national and international environmental NGOs. The opinion of the RAC was thus requested on the timeliness of such a meeting and on the orientation and the contents that it could possibly take.

Although all the participants agree for a transparent dialogue on the role of industrial logging in sustainable forest management, dialogue to be organised under the CBFP, many were those who suggested that instead of a big meeting the planned dialogue should take place within a restricted meeting which they consider to be more effective. Since the issue is not unique to DR Congo, the CBFP Facilitation plans to associate all the actors (administration, private sector, NGOs, local communities and populations) in the organisation of such dialogue. Since all the participants were of the opinion that such a meeting requires proper preparation, the CBFP Facilitation said that they expected to receive contributions from each and every one to better define the approach and contribute to its success.

5. Multilateral and international financing initiatives for the conservation and sustainable management of Congo Basin forests

The preliminary presentation on current funding initiatives made by Mr. Herbert Christ, Coordinator of the German Facilitation of CBFP, was preceded by the intervention of Mrs. Wangari Maathai, which gave a short outline of the situation of the Fund for the Forests of the Congo Basin of which she is Co-Chair of the Board of Directors. While thanking the British and Norwegian governments for their commitment to replenish the Fund, she recalled the efforts she has made in appealing for additional contributions from other donors and hopes that they will also bear fruits. Notwithstanding all these international undertakings, she stressed the importance for Central Africa to also implement the autonomous funding mechanism of COMIFAC, which would prove that the States of the sub-region are strongly committed to ensure the efficient functioning of their institutions, and would increase the

credibility of COMIFAC before partners. Mr. Herbert Christ then went on to make a comparison between the existing funding sources (bilateral and international official development assistance - ODA) and the various funding initiatives that are ongoing or underway. The comparison showed that a real increase in ODA for the forests at the international level was recorded since the year 2000 and that many new funding sources are currently being prepared or being put in place. Mention can be made here of two new initiatives of the World Bank and aimed at cutting forest carbon emissions, namely:

(1) Partnership Fund for the reduction of forest carbon emissions (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility – FCPF) with its preparatory mechanism (Readiness Fund - RF). The FCPF has a aim to support efforts being made by developing countries towards reducing emissions resulting from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) by developing forest stands. The files of some COMIFAC countries (Cameroon, DRC, Gabon and finally Congo, subject to the funds available) have already been admitted to the preparatory mechanism and will now be eligible for World Bank funding. This preparatory fund is meant to help them draw up national strategies for the reduction of carbon missions resulting from deforestation and forest degradation. Other countries (CAR, Equatorial Guinea) have not yet been admitted.

2) Climate Investment Funds – CIF), which bring together a Clean Technology Fund and a Strategic Climate Fund – SCF. The latter will comprise among other a thematic programme of one billion USD, set aside for sustainable forest management projects. Another international initiative that is now being developed is the United Nations REDD (UN REDD), a collaboration initiative between the UNDP, UNEP, FAO, aimed at building national capacity for the application of REDD approaches. This programme will be implemented in close collaboration with the FCPF.

As for initiatives directly meant for the Congo Basin, the first one to be mentioned is the **Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF)** which Alex Forbes, the Interim Coordinator, referred. After dwelling on the interim nature of his function which makes provision for support for the transfer of the functions of interim secretariat performed by DFID at the permanent secretariat lodged in the ADB, which was also represented in the RAC by Mr. Abdoulaye Dagamaissa, CBFF Task Manager, Mr. Alex Forbes presented an overview of the progress that has been made towards the setting up of the structures of the CBFF and the start of its activities. The CBFF steering committee has already met two times and will hold its next meeting in February 2009 in a Congo Basin country; the interim secretariat has already been set up and on 1 August made the first call for concept notes for projects to be funded. Out of 186 submitted, 94 have been approved and the bidders have been requested to furnish the detailed proposals which will be assessed in early 2009. Among the main criteria for the selection of projects are aspects of synergy with components 2, 6 and 9 of the “COMIFAC Convergence Plan”; but will also have innovative and transformational aspects of the project.

When questioned on the choice of components, Mr. Forbes confirmed that these components have been shortlisted as priorities, but that does not mean that other components may not be included in this list in future and depending on the financial means available. The COMIFAC Executive Secretary and the CBPF are also ex officio members (without the right to vote) of the Management Board and could at any time put forward their opinions in discussions.

Responding to the concerns of participants that in the first batch of bids there were applications received and approved coming more from international NGOs and projects in DR Congo, the CBFF representatives declared their commitment to improve communication in order to ensure that information gets to all potential candidates, the refurbishment of the office in the ADB is expected to improve communication channels. Furthermore, the deadline for responding to the 2nd call for projects to be announced in April 2009 will be longer and will be an opportunity for projects that were not shortlisted the first time to reintroduce their applications, but still with the concept notes attached, written in one of the official languages of the ADB, even if that were to cause some problems again to some NGOs.

Adding to the summary presentation on funding initiatives made by Herbert Christ, Jean-Marc Sinnassamy of the GEF Secretariat gave some details on the **Global Environment Facility (GEF) Programme for the sustainable management of Congo Basin Forests**, GEF being the main official funding mechanism for Rio international conventions. Since 1991 GEF has thus financed over 2200 projects for a total amount of over 8.1 billion USD, developed by GEF agencies such as the World Bank, UNDP, FAO, etc. GEF is not a new mechanism and several projects now being executed in the Congo basin have benefited from GEF financing. Several new projects that fall under a new strategic support programme for the sustainable management of Congo basin forests have also been identified and will be submitted for approval to the GEF Council in November 2008. The preparation of this new programme was informed on two aspects: 1) the global importance of Congo basin forest in global climate balance; 2) the under-representation of projects of the sub-region in the current cycle of GEF 4. A road map to draw up the programme was prepared during a meeting held in Gabon in February 2008, with high level participation of 6 countries each represented by a minister, the active presence of GEF partner agencies (World Bank, UNDP and UNEP), development partners and NGOs. That meeting also saw the adoption of a road map with objective to submit a programme to the GEF Council in November 2008. This will help to mobilize funds for the preparation of funds by late 2008 (500 000 \$ USA). The first projects could be implemented in the Congo basin by late 2009 and in 2010 for more complex projects.

It should be noted that the new GEF programme only covers 6 out of 10 COMIFAC countries. This choice was made on the basis of a study conducted for Tropical Forest Account of GEF, which selected 17 priority countries of the three major forest basins of the world depending on such criteria as surface area and representativeness of the forests at the national level. The other countries can use their appropriations for climate change or biodiversity to design projects on the same directives as the programme.

Then, on behalf of the ADB, Mr. Cléto Ndiikumagenge of the IUCN, to the satisfaction of COMIFAC, presented the biodiversity conservation programme around the five landscapes in the Congo Basin the preparation of which the IUCN facilitated.

Questioned on the role of COMIFAC in the implementation of this new programme, the GEF representative said that COMIFAC will have to continue playing its coordination role for regional activities such as the REDD project or that on the sustainable financing of protected areas. It can however be noted that through the personal intervention of the GEF President, Monique Barbut, a specific institutional capacity building project of COMIFAC was included in the programme.

6. Support to COMIFAC and sub-regional partners

This session was totally dedicated to strategic support programmes, hinged on the landscapes (USAID/CARPE), the COMIFAC Secretariat (Franco-German Support Bureau), COMIFAC working groups and CEFDHAC reforms.

6.1 Salient points of the Council of Minister's meetings in September and October 2008

As an introduction and to set the stage, Martin Tadoum, the new Assistant Executive Secretary of COMIFAC, made a synthesis of the main decisions arrived at in the two last sessions of the Council of Ministers (Bangui and Brazzaville),

(1) Bangui Decisions

Meeting in an ordinary session of the COMIFAC Council of Ministers on 11 September 2008 in Bangui (Central African Republic), the Ministers took the following key decisions:

- Adoption of a new organisational chart on which will feature, in addition to statutory senior positions, the following: 01 programme officer, 02 technical assistants, 01 jurist/taxation expert, 01 chargé communications and documentation officer, 01 accountant, 03 experts on conventions and support staff.
- Vacancy of senior statutory positions in the Executive Secretariat and invitation for interested countries to present candidates for the positions.
- The current COMIFAC Chair was assigned to consult with ECCAS authorities in order to work out a secure working method for the provision and use of resources allocated to COMIFAC and its partner institutions; this through autonomous funding mechanisms.
- Adoption of the statutory instruments of the reformed CEFDHAC especially the Statute, rules and regulations, organisational chart and the draft COMIFAC-CEFDHAC collaboration convention.
- Adoption of the sub-regional Programme of action for controlling land loss and desertification in Central Africa (PASR-LCD).
- Instructing the COMIFAC Executive Secretariat to undertake an appraisal of the situation in member countries with a view to making proposals for measures to improve the management of forest royalties paid back to the local populations.
- Instructing the Executive Secretariat to ensure that OFAC is permanent, particularly through the acquisition of a satellite image capture station for each country.
- Instructing the Executive Secretariat to include, in the internal rules and regulations, a provision on the yearly holding of an extraordinary session of the Council of Ministers.
- Approval of the principle to organise a 3rd Heads of State Summit in Kinshasa in 2009 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Yaounde Declaration.

(2) Brazzaville Decisions

Meeting in an extraordinary session of the COMIFAC Council of Ministers on 26 and 27 October 2008 in Brazzaville (Republic of Congo), the Ministers took the following key decisions:

- Adoption of the following instruments: Internal Rules and Regulations and the Staff Rules of the Executive Secretariat, Road map of the process for the harmonisation of forest policies, sub-regional directives on the sustainable management of plant non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in Central Africa, 2009-2010 biennial action plan, 2009-2010 budget forecast of the Executive Secretariat (option 2 with an amount of 1. 407 billion CFA F).
- Adoption and signing of the sub-regional agreement on forest control in Central Africa.
- Assessment of the achievements of the Executive Secretariat over the last two years and undertaking to do everything possible, on the one hand to clear all outstanding contributions and, on the other, to regularly pay in their contributions in order to help COMIFAC cover its operational costs.
- Decision, after consultation with a specialised structure, on the following appointments:
 - Executive Secretary: Mr. Raymond MBITIKON
 - Assistant Executive Secretary-Technical Coordinator: Mr. Martin TADOUM
 - Administrative and Finance Director: Mr. Etienne MASUMBUKO.

Participants unanimously saluted these important decisions taken by the Council of Ministers and which can give COMIFAC greater credibility on the international scene. We are referring here to the appointment of the management team of the Executive Secretariat going by the recommendations of a specialised consultancy, payment of outstanding contributions and the declared determination to henceforth provide COMIFAC and its partner sub-regional institutions with the means necessary for their proper functioning.

6.2 Support programme of the United States to COMIFAC

In his introductory remarks, Mr. Daniel A. Reifsnyder, Delegate of the Assistant Secretary of State recalled something the former Secretary of State Colin Powell said during the

launching of the CBFP in Johannesburg in the sidelines of the World summit on Sustainable Development, that: “the threat against our forests is by far an emergency in Africa, particularly in Central Africa, than any where else”. Having thus recognized the extraordinary biological diversity and the importance of the Congo Basin, the United States invested more than 100 million dollars for the implementation of the Convergence Plan and assistance to Central African countries in sustainable forest management, poverty alleviation and good governance. By choosing to be flexible and by letting the United States to play a lead role, the CBFP has recorded success in its actions and has spurred interest in development partners whose number and contributions to forest management in the Congo Basin is ever on the increase. According to the Global Environment Fund, more than 20 new funding mechanisms have been developed last year, contributing a total 670 million US dollars for the Congo Basin alone.

For Mr. Reifsnyder, this multiplication of funding sources calls for better coordination between all the partners who must understand the missions and priorities of each other in order to avoid duplication and increase the value of each contribution. This is the role that the CBFP will have to continue to play by being flexible and by ensuring excellent communication in order to achieve the desired success, and in doing this the CBFP could always count on the contribution of the United States.

The presentation of John Flynn who listened to the introductory remarks of Mr. Reifsnyder, dwelled on the results already achieved under the “landscape approach” being used by the USAID/CARPE programme and the importance of macro-zoning. At the moment (2008), the zones in which the « landscape » approach is being applied add up to a total surface area of 82 351 955 ha. Out of this surface area, enhanced landscape management is applied on 53 910 172 ha. Land use distribution in this surface area is as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| ▪ Protected areas: | 17 880 079 ha |
| ▪ Community forests: | 21 040 366 ha |
| ▪ Forest exploitation areas: | 14 986 727 ha |

Mapped out information on the changes in the Congo Basin forest cover is available on the Internet and the pooling of data on biodiversity is currently going on. The forest resources monitoring/control aspect and the production of atlases have already taken up nearly 20 million US dollars.

In reacting to this presentation which revealed that CARPE had a lot of data that is sufficiently advanced on forest resources and biodiversity, participants expressed the wish to see i) the Working Group on climate change (GT CCC) draw from such data in the ongoing negotiation in the UNFCCC on the role forests play in climate change, ii) FORAF work in synergy with CARPE in order to further enrich the data on the situation of forests.

Participants also expressed the wish to see the relationship between the WG/CCC and the various groups with technical expertise strengthened in order to create synergies and make the most of the work done under the partnership. The COMIFAC ES should thus act as the intermediary. Negotiators in the UNFCCC were thus requested to attend the validation workshop of the 2008 report on the situation of forests.

6.3 Support Programme of the Franco-German Bureau (FGB) to the ES/COMIFAC

This item was presented by Christophe Besacier (French Cooperation) and Claus Michael Falkenberg (German Cooperation). Since 2005, support packages from the FGB and the FAO to ES/COMIFAC have been planned on a annual basis in tandem with the Executive Secretariat and in keeping with the following aspects mutually agreed upon: (1) Planning and M&E; (2) Communication and information; (3) Consultation and national, regional and international dialogue; (4) Coordination and implementation of the Convergence Plan; (5) Council of Ministers.

Mr. Christophe Besacier noted that the activities of the Franco-German support Bureau to COMIFAC are carried out following a common timetable. After this programming in which the COMIFAC Executive Secretariat normally takes part, the French side signed an execution

convention with the Executive Secretariat for the financing of the actual activities of COMIFAC, with the funding of the Executive Secretariat devolving to Central African States. Ongoing activities concern:

- Continuation of the publication of the COMIFAC news bulletin (*COMIFAC News*);
- Finalisation of the study on the COMIFAC communication strategy;
- Support to the Executive Secretary in the coordination of COMIFAC activities;
- Support to activities relating to the:
 - Harmonisation of policies (comparative analysis of forest codes);
 - Definition of forest management standards;
 - Study on the permanent mechanism for the follow-up of forest activities;
 - Organisation and functioning of Working Groups on the major conventions: CBD, CCC, Desertification Control;
 - prospective study on the REDD process;
 - Inventory of green house gas emission.

Many of these activities are co-funded with the German Cooperation. The French side is however now restructuring its programming. For now, the planning according to conventions with COMIFAC provides for a direct support package of 500 000 € per year. For 2008-2009 the funding method will be reviewed (drawing from the findings of the audit that are generally said to be satisfactory). Thus for 2008-2009, a budget of 340 000 € has been drawn up to finance support activities to COMIFAC. A more detailed planning will be made with the new team at the Executive Secretariat. This programme will cover aspects related to COMIFAC communication, support for building the capacity of the ES, support for the harmonization of policies and for the Working Groups on the major conventions.

For Mr. Falkenberg, in addition to support activities that are planned on a yearly basis at the level of the ES /COMIFAC in agreement with the Executive Secretariat within the framework of the FGB, the German facilitation programme includes regional and bilateral support activities of the German Cooperation. This programme is broken down into 4 components: (1) institutional capacity building; (2) forest governance; (3) implementation of the convergence plan; (4) funding mechanisms.

The synthesis of these two planning approaches is as follows for activities planned by the German Cooperation:

(1) Institutional support to the ES/COMIFAC

- Annual planning (NWP)
- Communication strategy, PROMOTE 2008
- M&E of the Convergence Plan and re-planning 2009 - 2011; 2008 situation of forests, 2050 prospective study
- Support to national coordination offices, COMIFAC Working Groups (equipment, meetings, electronic communication platform)
- Reform and strengthening of COMIFAC institutions (CEFDHAC: conventions IUCN and WRI; OCFSA/ADIE)
- Promotion of the autonomous funding mechanism; financial management; audit

(2) Support for the implementation of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan

- Forest governance (WG (A)FLEG(T), training, report on governance, support for certification, FLEGT process)
- Implementation of conventions:
 - Working Group on Central Africa Biodiversity (support for negotiation, APA, involvement of indigenous peoples)
 - Working Group on Climate Change (support for negotiation, pilot projects MDP/REDD)
 - Working Group on Desertification (drawing up and implementation of the

PASR/LCD)

- Working Group on FNUF (support for negotiation)
- Training (forest developers)
- Thematic support
 - NTFPs
 - Directives on permanent sites for monitoring the vegetation
 - Trans-border Park TNS and B-S.O.
 - Comparative study on forest legislation
- Micro-projects
 - ENEF, Gabon
 - Management and Development Plan, S.-O.
 - Burundi, CAR

(3) Support to the Chair of COMIFAC and to the Council of Ministers

Many actions have been planned that are still unspecified

In budgetary terms, the 2009 Prospects for the German Cooperation are as follows:

- Support to COMIFAC: 4 Million €
- Pilot project REDD Cameroon-Bolivia (KFW/GTZ) 1.5 Million €
- Climate change scenarios (BMU/GTZ) 1.5 Million € (in the planning phase)
- Support for certification (KFW) 10 Million € (in the planning phase)
- Continuous training RIFFEAC (InWent) 1 Million € (in the planning phase).

On questions about the support specifically provided to the RIFFEAC training stream, the BFA representatives replied that the "Forestry training" component has always been a priority in the support policies of all partners. Speaking on behalf of RIFFEAC, the FAO representative confirmed that apart from the measures cited, the FGB, in collaboration with forestry training institutions from Germany, will provide support for the organisation of a 2nd consensus workshop on training support scheduled for December 1st in Douala with a main focus on issues relating to the training policy. He also invites other partners to further strengthen their activities on training, especially with RIFFEAC. In response to this request, the European Commission mentioned its support at the national level (DRC) and the implementation of a Master in Forestry in partnership with CIFOR, the FAO and the University of Brussels (20 Millions €). The Commission does not intend to cast doubt on the structural importance of RIFFEAC, but to make sure that prime institutional beneficiaries (schools) are rendered a centralised support. It is also obvious that university training affects only a small portion of all parties involved in the management of forestry resources; therefore, the capacity building of the marginalized groups (the natives) may also be boosted by "scientific" programmes. An appeal was therefore made to other partners to help strengthen training institutions located within the countries of the COMIFAC zone.

Finally, Mr Besacier pointed out that in a bid to supplement the efforts of partners in supporting the ES/ COMIFAC, Cameroon has decided to deduct from the Debt reduction and Development Contract (**C2D**) a budget of 300 million CFA francs to provide offices that will accommodate ES/COMIFAC services. Representatives of COMIFAC countries have expressed their appreciation for the efforts provided by the FGB and promised to file reports to their respective Ministers in charge of forestry.

6.4 CEFDHAC Reforms

Mrs. Leticia Pina Cortez, the BFA Support Technical Advisor to COMIFAC, presented this specific aspect of the BFA programme that was developed in collaboration with WRI and UICN. A participatory reform process launched in 2005 was necessary to i) solve problems

relating to the failures and inconsistencies observed, ii) allow CEFDHAC better assume its role which is specified in the COMIFAC Treaty, and iii) revitalize COMIFAC and provide it with a new momentum through a greater visibility and efficiency in its activities.

After the adoption of the reform documents by the COMIFAC Council of Ministers in Bangui on September 2008, the COMIFAC Executive secretariat was instructed to ensure the effective implementation of CEFDHAC operational bodies.

The road map for establishing CEFDHAC bodies provides support to sub-regional networks, to the organisation of national forums and to the start-up of the steering committee.

The COMIFAC Support Office supports this process through two networks (The Central African Parliamentarians Network / REPAR and the Network of native and indigenous peoples of Central Africa / REPALEAC) based in two countries (DRC and Cameroon). Though CEFDHAC groups a total of 5 networks, these two particular networks have been chosen for two reasons: first, the need for support is less pronounced at the level of the other networks (better organised or supported). Second, the approach was developed as a test that could then be applied to other networks in other countries. The REPAR meeting held in April 2008, members of the regional office have been commissioned and the action plan approved. Partners are currently sought for to help implement the approved action plan.

Regarding the concern expressed by some participants on the legitimacy of support in case the expected results of the quite expensive forums are not well defined and whether there is no risk that these networks may dislocate and become virtual structures, partners have indicated their preference at providing support to more dynamic networks that demonstrate a common vision rather than organising rallies of no specific purpose. According to the COMIFAC Treaty, the organisation of national forums should be conducted by countries; national coordinators are therefore called upon to assume those responsibilities.

6.5 CBFP activities within the framework of major conventions on forests and the environment – the support and role of COMIFAC working groups

6.5.1 Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Mr. OKO Rufin, co-leader of the Working group on the Convention on Biological Diversity, presented this item indicating that the first implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in countries of the Congo Basin was followed by the CBD National Focus Points which established in 2006 the Biodiversity Working Group of Central Africa (WG CAB) for COMIFAC. Formalized in May 2007, this group has become the technical tool of COMIFAC with regard to the implementation of the CBD in Central Africa. It finds its substance in Component 1 and Component 4 of COMIFAC's Convergence Plan (Harmonization of forest and tax policies – and Biodiversity Conservation).

The WG CAB mission is to support the implementation of the CBD at the national level; to follow-up the CBD's implementation at sub-regional level; to coordinate external support; to help develop a common stand for countries of the Congo Basin that shall be defended during the international dialogue on biodiversity and to act as a tool for implementing the biodiversity component of COMIFAC's Convergence Plan.

Thanks to financing from the French and German facilitations for the CBFP, from the Franco-German Support Office to the COMIFAC Executive Secretariat and from the Executive Secretariat of the CBD, COMIFAC countries organised and/or took part in a significant number of national, regional or international forums.

The implementation of the CBD in countries of the Congo Basin is inevitably subjected to the adoption of national strategies and action plans on biodiversity. This is the reason why the GTBAC took the option to:

- Work towards the strengthening of regional capacities in implementing the CBD,
- Provide national and sub-regional releases of the findings of the regional or international forums in order to enhance the flow of relevant information on the implementation of the CBD and significant environmental agreements within Central Africa.

- Follow-up the implementation of the CBD core contents that were identified at the national and regional levels.

These various aspects contribute to the implementation of Strategies and National Action Plans on Biodiversity (SPANB) and their integration into sectoral policies and strategies, relations between regional issues and various CBD working programmes (forests, protected areas, tourism...) and issues related to the Access to and Sharing of Benefits (APA) from the exploitation of biodiversity resources. Moreover, members or actors have been dispatched according to their technical skills in various breakout groups in order to ensure a rational organisation and the quest for operating efficiency and labour productivity.

At the end of his presentation, Mr. OKO stressed on the importance of National Action plans on Biodiversity (SPANB) that should be integrated in the sectoral policies and strategies, in various CBD working programmes and in issues related to the Access to and Sharing of Benefits (APA) from the exploitation of biodiversity resources. All countries of the COMIFAC area should simultaneously establish or revitalize interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral committees for the implementation and follow-up of SPANBs, especially the committees on biodiversity. They should implement a common monitoring-evaluation system at the sub-regional level, generate reports using the indicators to be adopted at the sub-regional level and encourage forest concessions to lay better emphasis on biodiversity in their working plan.

6.5.2 Convention on Climate Change

This item was presented by Mr. Martin Tadoum, the Assistant Executive Secretary of COMIFAC. Over the last decade, climate change has become a major concern for the international community. By storing and sequestering carbon, forests play a vital role in regulating the global climate regime. To address the issues of climate change, the fight against deforestation and the sustainable management of tropical forests have emerged as real opportunities that can help significantly reduce emissions with lower economic costs. In December 2005, the international dialogue on the inclusion of "reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation" (REDD) in the post-Kyoto regime in 2012 was launched at COP 11 in Montréal. This initiative was supported by COMIFAC member countries and it resulted in the following actions:

- Strong participation of COMIFAC experts to the sub-regional and international preparatory meetings relating to negotiations on the REDD initiative;
- Submission of four bids in May 2006, March 2007, August 2007 and March 2008 respectively at the Convention Secretariat on this issue;
- Active participation of countries of the Congo Basin in discussions on REDD during the Conference of Parties (COP 13) in December 2007 in Bali, Indonesia;
- Current development of a REDD pilot project in Cameroon with the support of GTZ in order to propose appropriate methodologies
- Reaffirmation of the elements on the stand of countries of the sub-region in the final bid of March 2008 relating to methodological issues:
 - Including degradation as well as deforestation in accounting for emissions;
 - Taking account of the specificities of forests of the Congo Basin, engaged in a sustainable management process through forest management and protected areas;
 - Establishment of a market mechanism linked to commitments from the North to cover the opportunity cost of forest protection to curb deforestation;
 - Establishment of a funding mechanism to support or compensate the efforts of countries of the Congo Basin to maintain carbon stocks up;
- Sub-regional discussions on the climate focus points in July 2008 in Paris
- Meeting in Accra in August 2008 to review the sectoral approach proposal and the financial incentives of REDD
- Preparatory meeting of the focus points in November 2008 in Paris

- Preparation of the 14th COP in December 2008 in Poznan

6.5.3 Master Agreement on the Fight against Desertification

As part of the implementation of the Convention on the Fight against Desertification in Central Africa, the Council of Ministers adopted the Bangui sub-regional programme to fight against land degradation and desertification (SRAP-LCD) in September 2008. The ES / COMIFAC lodged a complaint with the Global Mechanism for support to mobilise funds for implementing this programme. A regional programme to support the mobilization of funding has been developed by GM in collaboration with COMIFAC. The results of this programme are:

- Strengthening content partnerships on the concerted management of cross-border transhumance in Central Africa;
- Improving the integration of GDT into major political processes;
- Analysing the implementation of innovative financing mechanisms;

The financing mobilised for the first year of the project amounts to 167, 245 U.S dollars. A cooperation agreement between the ES / COMIFAC and the Director General of the GM was signed in August 2008. As part of the support programme, a sub-regional workshop was held in Douala from September 30 to October 1, 2008. The workshop was attended by twenty participants and aimed to analyse the opportunities and constraints in mobilizing resources for the implementation of the SRAP / LCD and PAN / LCD in Central Africa.

This was followed by the meeting of the sub-regional coordination of the SRAP-LCD in Douala from 02 to 03 October 2008, confirming the mandate, role and composition of the CSRC and constituting the CDD Working group. The participants also discussed the agenda of the 7th session of the committee for the review of the implementation of the Convention (CRIC) scheduled in Turkey from 03 to 14 November 2008 and adopted a road map for the working group.

6.5.4 Other support programmes at COMIFAC

1) UNEP Support

UNEP is committed to providing support to COMIFAC countries in REDD negotiations. A ministerial consultation took place in Bangui alongside the Council of Ministers of COMIFAC and the Ministers signed a declaration. UNEP has also pledged to provide funding for the forests of Central Africa, especially for the establishment of the Congo, DRC and Angola cross-border complex

2) Canada's Support

Following the request issued by the COMIFAC Executive Secretariat to CIDA in 2005, CIDA prepared a draft programme for institutional support after consultation with stakeholders. This programme was finalised and forwarded to the Canadian government in 2007. A four-year regional training programme has been developed with a budget of \$ 5 million. This programme aims at strengthening the capacities of some training institutions (FASA Dschang / Cameroon, ENEF / Gabon, FSA / DRC, ERAIFT / DRC, ENEF /Cameroon) of the COMIFAC area. The kick-off meeting of this training programme to be conducted by the University of Laval has been planned for November 2008 in Douala.

7. Forest Governance in Central Africa

7.1 Dialogue with Asian operators of the forest sectors during and after the Libreville May 2008 meeting

This item was presented by Samuel Makon, the CBFP Facilitator Delegate. The dialogue with Asian operators of the forest sector in Central Africa was launched on May 22, 2008 in Libreville, Gabon. The meeting was organised by COMIFAC with the support of the German Facilitation at the CBFP and IFIA. This meeting brought together approximately 70 participants from, among others, forest administrations of Cameroon, Gabon and Congo,

unions affiliated to IFIA and Asian-owned businesses operating in the sub-region, private operators from China, representatives of the relevant ministries in Beijing and local NGOs. The Congolese Minister of Forest Economy, His Excellency Henri Djombo and the Chinese and German Ambassadors in Gabon also took part in the opening ceremony.

The CBFP initiative to organise this meeting is part of a series of similar contacts:

- The China - Europe Dialogue on FLEGT with a conference in Beijing scheduled for August 2007, followed by top level political consultations between the European Commission and Chinese partners, which, unfortunately, have not yet produced a regular working programme as envisaged from the outset;
- Visits of representatives of the Chinese Ministry of Forestry and Trade in Central Africa in May 2008, organised by the IUCN and the WWF to be marked by a workshop and the publication of the findings;
- The development of a study by CIFOR on the economic factors (investments, trade) applicable in the various sectors affecting forests in Central Africa;
- Meeting of the Working group on forest issues in Central Africa between the US State Department, the Treasury and the Chinese Government

All these contacts aim at providing a dialogue sphere between the public and the private sectors on one hand, but also between companies with a long term operation in Central Africa and Asian-owned companies recently settled in countries of this sub-region, in order to make all operators work together in respect of the policies and laws of countries of this sub-region towards the sustainable management of production forests. They also intend to commonly seek ways to improve the image of the forest sector in Central Africa among the major importing countries whose markets are increasingly demanding in terms of legally and ecologically certified products.

Following the Libreville meeting, the CBFP Facilitator held talks with the Chinese ambassadors in Brazzaville and Kinshasa who promised to provide support in the organisation of similar meetings once it is possible to identify a sufficient number of new Chinese operators. The Facilitator and the Environment and Development Divisions of the European Commission in Brussels also agreed to encourage the multiplication of meetings in Beijing as well as the dialogue between Chinese authorities and representatives of the CBFP member countries.

On the sidelines of the IUCN Congress in Barcelona in early September, the CBFP Facilitator also benefited from a meeting with the leadership of the Chinese Ministry of Forestry to enhance dialogue. The Chinese partners are willing to consult the COMIFAC Executive secretariat in drafting the guidelines for Chinese operators involved in the management of natural resources (like the guidelines already published in the plantation sector). They are planning to invite the Chair and ES / COMIFAC to visit Beijing to prepare a cooperation agreement on a more regular basis and they do not exclude the possibility to later join the CBFP.

After this presentation, the participants unanimously agreed on the principle of dialogue continuation with Asian actors by seeking ways to gradually integrate them into the partnership. Given the multiple initiatives (WWF, "China for a Shift Network", Tropenbos International for the training of exporters, the US State Department, the EU...) they have recommended that all stakeholders work in synergy.

7.2 Support to the certification of production forest concessions

After recalling the common stand published in the report on the "State of Forests in 2006", the CBFP Facilitator gave the floor to the KfW office Director in Yaoundé, Gerard Daraspe who presented a first "relevant" study that was carried out in June / July 2008 on the master conditions for the sustainable forest management and certification, the current action measures, the needs in technical and financial support and the experience with financing institutions and banks to identify the terms and modalities of a potential KfW support.

The final report of this study that was issued in September 2008 led to the following conclusions:

- Many loggers in Central Africa are currently engaged in developing management plans on approx. 20 million ha.
- The costs of development and certification are relatively high (6 to 10 € / ha for development, around 8 € / ha / year for certification).
- Many international and local NGOs are currently working with loggers and trying to cope with challenges of sustainable forest management.
- Economic operators in the forest sector have expressed significant needs for technical and financial support to face the reluctance of local banks
- The study resolutely concludes for a scenario to promote forest certification, knowing that the instrument is not perfect but it is currently the only one that is functional and recognized in terms of sustainable forest management in Central Africa

Comments from German authorities are expected before proceeding to the feasibility study that will confirm / validate the relevance of an intervention and submit proposals for the design and implementation of a project in due form. The support given by KfW could focus on logging and certification agencies; GTZ is responsible for the implementation of technical support. In this perspective KfW would like to know the position of the COMIFAC and the CBFP partners on such a proposal for financial support to the certification process.

In their statements following the briefing by Mr. Daraspe, participants recognized the complexity of the topic and noted the efforts already deployed by some major logging companies for the certification of their concessions and despite these efforts, these companies are still upbraided by environmental NGOs. They also noted that audits generally conducted by European companies are expensive and do not all have the same standard. Therefore, they have recommended training local certification bodies and have asked the CBFP facilitation to engage in the communication of a common stand for the CBFP on this matter.

7.3 Item on the negotiation of Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union

The statement of Mr. Alain Pénelon who presented this item shows that though the private sector has an important role to play, it is the responsibility of the States to primarily set out the rules of the game with regards to issues of legality. It is therefore essential to distinguish between the certification of the management of forest concessions for industrial use and forest governance to review the legality of trade. In addition to the prospect of signing a trade agreement, FLEGT negotiations are also a unique opportunity for the producer to question the entire functioning of a pipeline.

In the COMIFAC area, negotiations are most advanced in Cameroon where several formal sessions and technical discussions have resulted in agreement on many points of the agreement. Congo launched formal negotiations in June 2008, the Central African Republic and Gabon intend to do so during the first half of 2009. The Central African Republic has benefited from the experiences of Cameroon under an exchange on the control of timber transit / exported timber.

Participants questioned why the EU did not consider a regional approach in these VPA, and it gave an opportunity to emphasize that the VPA are bilateral agreements, and as such, negotiations can only be initiated upon each country's individual request to the European Union. Although these VPA includes all COMIFAC countries, the negotiations must be conducted by the government of each country. Regional concerns are rather in the challenge on timber transit. The harmonization of policies, favoured by the FAO, can facilitate exchange even if agreements are not signed by all countries.

Regarding costs, the participants distinguished between the agreements' set-up costs (250,000 – 400,000 €) and future costs for audits (frequency to negotiate) to ensure respect of the legality of timber exported. The high value of these costs should not be considered an

argument against the VPAs which only constitute a tool to strengthen law enforcement with a built-in control strategy. Besides, although the operators of traceability systems are ready to sell their tools, the capacities to implement these tools are not yet guaranteed.

Mr. Pénelon also noted that a significant gap has already widened between the countries involved in the process of legality with VPAs and others, especially in improving governance within forest administrations.

8. Progress Report on the Evaluation of the Plan of Operations of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan (POPC)

This point was presented by Günter Winckler, the evaluation Team Supervisor. The 2006-2008 three-year plan of operations of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan (POPC) includes 10 areas, 22 components and 85 activities. In 2006, the operationalization defined a "regional" Plan of operations with transaction records of the activities and "national" Plans of operations which are "national" variations of the regional POPC.

The overall objective of the evaluation is: i) to assess the implementation of the 2006-2008 triennial plan of operations and ii) identify recommendations and prospects for the planning of the next three-year phase (2009 - 2011). On October 31, 2008, the assessment activities at the country level were completed (including the holding of workshops), most reports are available, the sub-regional report is being prepared and the synthesis report will be developed during the month of November 2008. The evaluation schedule and validation of the final report will be done as follow:

- Drafting the synthesis report (end of November 08)
- Submitting the assessment results to the steering committee and holding discussions on the next plan of operations (January 2009)
- Presenting the assessment results to key technical and financial partners (January / February 2009)
- Drafting an orientation project for the 2009 – 2011 plan of operations and approval by the steering committee (March 2009)

9. Working Schedule of the CBFP Facilitation (2008 – 2009)

Before presenting the working schedule of the CBFP German Facilitation, Mr. Herbert Christ, Coordinator of the Facilitation first summarized the key actions in implementing the road map of the German Facilitation for the 2008-2009 period.

9.1 Institutional Strengthening of the ES and partner institutions

The following activities are part of a scheme to strengthen the capacities of the actors directly called on to implement the Plan of Convergence:

- Consultation support to the new COMIFAC presidency and the ES
- Consultation support for the organisation of the Bangui and Brazzaville Councils of Ministers;
- Facilitation / restraint and participation to the various COMIFAC working groups;
- Facilitating the assessment of the Convergence Plan and its plan of operation with a team of several international and national experts;
- Support in promoting the coordination role of the COMIFAC towards partners by developing new support programmes (REDD)
- Support for the design of new projects funded by Germany (KfW, InWent)

9.2 Institutional Strengthening of the CBFP

The activities carried out within this theme aim to better appraise the coordination efforts within the CBFP and fall in line with the promotion of the CBFP:

- Designing / implementing an internal and external strategy targeting a specific audience and complementing the communication tools developed by COMIFAC institutions

- Organising statutory meetings
- Redesigning / communication initiative of partners' activities by theme
- Introducing the CBFP at international conferences
- Sensitization and support to the entry process of new partners: Spain, ADB, UNEP, CMS, UNDP, Precious Woods

9.3 Strengthening forest governance and master conditions

The activities below were designed to promote the AFLEG and PNF processes, the process of certifying concessions and the involvement of various stakeholders:

- Support to national certification initiatives
- Organising (with IFIA) a workshop for dialogue with the new Asian actors of the forest sector, including ensuring broad-based dialogue with the private sector
- Support to dialogue on the implementation of the Forestry Code in DRC, putting the Chatham House results in practice

9.4 Key international conventions and REDD processes

The activities below were designed to support COMIFAC countries in developing and defending a common stand at international dialogues on forests and the environment. They also sought to strengthen capacities for the implementation of REDD and APA processes and to develop pilot projects:

- Support (with WWF) to the organisation of a workshop in Washington to coordinate support activities of REDD processes in Central Africa
- Introducing a reflection process on the added value of "conservation concessions" in Central Africa
- Support to the participation and posting of representatives of the sub-region to major events / conferences (COP 9 at Bonn and SBSTA at Rome)

9.5 Innovative financial mechanisms

The activities below aimed at appraising the initiatives on the financing of the forest-environment sector and the possible options relating to a voluntary global financial mechanism for the international forest regime (UNFF):

- Support to policy dialogue (CBF FCPF, GEF / GEF, UNFF)
- Establishing an autonomous funding mechanism for COMIFAC Sensitization and lobbying to maintain the topic on the political agenda

The activities to be conducted in the coming months include among others:

- Continuing dialogue with the Asian actors (especially the Chinese) of the forest sector in the Congo Basin, together with other ongoing initiatives (USA, WWF, DGIS/Tropenbos International).
- Organising the consultation and positioning of the CBFP on the role of industrial timber exploitation in the sustainable management of forests of the Congo Basin.
- Deepening reflection on the concept of conservation concessions in Central Africa.
- Support to COMIFAC in its role in coordinating policies and interventions in Central Africa and in the search for common stands for countries of the Congo Basin in international negotiations
- The continuous representation and promotion of the CBFP.

9.6 Next plenary meeting of the RAC

The next RAC meeting will take place in Douala (Cameroon) during the first quarter of 2009. The new RAC formula, which emphasizes on dialogue and exchanges, has been welcomed by all partners. It was agreed that a workshop / working committee be held on the sidelines

of the RAC meeting in order to allow participants deepen certain aspects of forestry development they face.

As for the next CBFP plenary meeting, it could be combined with the 3rd Summit of Heads of State of Central Africa scheduled in Kinshasa to mark the 10th anniversary of the Declaration of Yaoundé (Yaoundé +10). The date of this meeting will depend on the date scheduled for the Summit of Heads of State, unless, for some reasons, partners decide to hold both events separately. In either case, partners will be informed in time.

10. Presenting the CBFP new communication strategy and the new configuration of its Website

This point was presented by Mrs. Cornelia Seegers, the CBFP communication manager. When they took over in 2007, the German facilitation for the CBFP undertook to develop and implement a communication and promotion strategy for CBFP to complement and support the communication strategy of COMIFAC .

The **internal communication** of the Facilitation implied the increase of the value added perception of the CBFP network and the quality of information shared. Through **external communication**, the German Facilitation German aimed at promoting the partnership role and increasing its visibility, and ensuring that the information is consistent and transparent. As regards communication through its members, it would enhance the reputation and legitimacy of CBFP members, convey a CBFP image that reflects the values of a cross and transparent cooperation.

The tools chosen for this communication are: the electronic mailing list, the newsletter, the CBFP leaflet and the CBFP website www.cbfp.org.

The activities carried out under the use of these tools are:

- Expanding the distribution list of information from the CBFP or its members and related or relevant to forests of the Congo Basin and the Central African countries
- The regular release of a newsletter that briefly summarizes and incorporates certain information headlights
- the publishing of specific leaflets
- the technical improvement of the CBFP Website in its French and English versions

In response to all these changes, partners expressed great satisfaction with the CBFP Website, newsletter and leaflet, were in high demand during the various exchanges and meetings.

11. Conclusions of the RAC meeting

At his closing remark for the RAC meeting, Mr. Hans Schipulle, CBFP Facilitator, thanked all participants for their constructive contributions in an atmosphere marked by a strong desire to move forward together. He then summarized the main conclusions and recommendations below emerging from the discussions:

- Participants have unanimously approved the ongoing dialogue with the Asian actors (especially Chinese) of the forest sector in the Congo Basin and have recommended that other initiatives similar to those of the German Facilitation (USA, WWF, DGIS / Tropenbos International) conducted by other partners do collaborate with the German Facilitation of the CBFP and work in synergy.
- Participants have agreed to organise a consultation and dialogue on the role of industrial timber exploitation in the sustainable management of forests of the Congo Basin and recommended that the Facilitator prepares the positioning of CBFP on this important issue on the basis of broad consultation.
- The approval of approaches to help COMIFAC play a role in coordinating policies and interventions in Central Africa and the search for common stands for countries of the Congo Basin in international negotiations.

- All partners have recognised the importance of an autonomous funding mechanism for COMIFAC that can be capable of delivering long-term finance charges of the relevant sub-regional institutions.
- Douala (Cameroon) will host the next RAC meeting to be coupled with a workshop on a topic of concern relating to forestry development in the sub-region.
- Kinshasa will host the next CBFP plenary meeting alongside the 3rd Summit of Heads of State of Central Africa. The date of this top level meeting will be set by the authorities of DR Congo.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. List of Participants in the Regional Advisory Committee

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66.	S.E Wangari Maathai	Honorary Ambassador	
67.	S.E Yvonne MBOISSONA	CAR	
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72.	Yves NOUVELLET	CIRAD	Yves.nouvellet@cirad.fr

ANNEX 2: Agenda of the CBFP Regional Advisory Committee, 30-31 October, 2008, Hotel Méridien, Brazzaville.

Thursday, October 30, 2008	
14.30 – 15.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration and Installation of participants in the CBFP Regional Consultative Committee
	Preliminary presentations and discussions
15.00 – 15.30 15.30 – 16.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2008 State of the forests (Carlos de WASSEIGE / Richard EBA' HAS ATYI - FORAF) Large-scale logging and sustainable forest management (Samuel Makon)
16.00 – 16.20	<i>Coffee Break</i>
	Significant multilateral and international financing initiatives for the conservation and sustainable management of Congo Basin forests
16.20 – 16.40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synoptic presentation of the financing initiatives in progress and in preparation (Herbert Christ)
16.40 – 17.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main outcomes of the meetings on financing initiatives in Washington (FCPF & REDD/COMIFAC) (Hans Schipulle)
17.00 – 17.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congo Basin forests Fund and ADB support Programme for COMIFAC (ADB)
17.20 - 17.40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of other support programs with COMIFAC (GEF, UNEP, Canada) (SE/COMIFAC – Martin Tadoum)
17.40 – 18.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of CBFP's communication strategy and the new configuration of CBFP's Web site (Cornelia Seegers Sylla)
19.00 – 21.00	<i>Reception</i>
Friday, October 31, 2008	
8.30 – 9.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registration and Installation of participants in CBFP's Regional Advisory Committee
9.00 – 9.40	Official opening of the CBFP's Regional Advisory Committee session
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introductory speech by Mr. Hans Schipulle, Facilitator of the CBFP Speech by Mrs. Wangari Maathai, Honorary Ambassador of the Congo Basin Forests Speech by the Congolese Minister in charge of Forestry Speech by the current President of COMIFAC
9.40 – 10.00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
	Assistance to COMIFAC and other sub-regional partners
10.00 – 10.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad outlines of the meetings of the Council of Ministers held in September and October (by the Executive Secretariat of COMIFAC)
10.30 – 11.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of the current US support program for COMIFAC and the way forward (Dan Reifsnnyder, USDS and John Flynn)
11.00 - 11.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of the current support program of the joint French/German Office for ES/COMIFAC: strategic broad outline and key activities for 2008-2009 (Christophe Besacier and Claus-Michael Falkenberg)
11.30 – 11.45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBFP Activities within the framework of major conventions on forests and the environment
11.45 - 12.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Convention on biological diversity (OKO) ➤ Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Martin Tadoum/ focal Point Climate Congo) and
12.00 – 12.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preparation of the 14th conference of the parties of the UNFCCC in December 2008 in Poznan (Poland) (Martin Tadoum)
12.15 – 12.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) (Martin Tadoum)
12.30 – 13.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significance of CEFDHAC reforms and their implementation (Leticia Fucked Cortèz)
13.00 – 14.00	<i>Lunch Break</i>
	Forest Governance in central Africa

14.00 – 14.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue with the private sector, including Asian operators (IFIA) (Samuel Makon) • Support initiatives for the certification process (Gerard Daraspe) • Meetings of Chatham House, (Hans Schipulle) • VPA/EU Negotiations in Central Africa (Alain Pénelon) • Proposals by partners on transparency in forest activities and the involvement of the civil society and local communities in decision-making on forests
14.20 – 14.40	
14.40 – 15.00	
15.00 – 15.20	
15.20 – 15.40	
	<i>Coffee Break</i>
	Up-coming events
16.00 – 16.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation of the implementation of the convergence Plan (Winckler Günter) • CBFP Work schedule for 2008-2009 (Herbert Christ) and major events earmarked for 2008 - 2009 in the sub-region (Martin Tadoum) • Date for the next RAC meeting and the next major plenary session of CBFP (Christ/Makon)
16.15 – 16.40	
16.40 – 17.00	
17.00	Closing Ceremony

ANNEX 3: Speeches at the opening ceremony, Friday, 31 October

3.1 Introductory Statement by Mr. Hans SCHIPULLE, CBFP Facilitator

Your Excellencies,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I first of all wish to thank all of you who took time off your busy schedules to attend this meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee on the Congo Basin Forest Partnership. I also wish to express our gratitude to the Congolese Government and People for the cordial welcome we were honoured with, and for the efforts made to ensure the success of our meeting here in Brazzaville.

Thus, after our last meeting in Bangui in March 2008, I am once again pleased to welcome you this time in Brazzaville for yet another meeting of the RAC of our Partnership. I am all the more happy since eminent personalities including the Nobel Peace Prize, Honourable **Wangari Maathai**, Honorary Ambassador for the Congo Basin Forest Ecosystems, and Ministers **Yvonne Mboissona** and **Henri Djombo** honoured us with their participation in our deliberations. To them I specially extend my warm welcome. I wish to recall to those who may have forgotten that the ten countries of the Congo Basin, members of COMIFAC, are also full members of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership. For this reason, their representatives do not need particular invitation to attend our meetings.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The regular holding of our meetings is a clear sign of the vitality of our Partnership in a fast-moving Congo Basin, as evidenced by the unfolding events in Brazzaville since October 26, 2008:

- The extraordinary Council of COMIFAC Ministers which took significant decisions that will make history in this institution, namely the appointment to the Executive Secretariat of Messrs **Raymond Mbitikon** and **Martin Tadoum** to the posts of Executive Secretary and Assistant Executive Secretary respectively;
- The 6th Forum on Sustainable Development which brought together several institutional and economic partners involved in sustainable development, in a world confronted with one of the most serious financial crises of its history;
- And now the meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee of the CBFP is being held so that the various partners can share experiences on the activities carried out or planned under our partnership and to reflect on realistic and achievable approaches to support efforts made by the Congo Basin countries under COMIFAC for the conservation and sustainable management of their forest resources.

Dear participants, today's meeting here in Brazzaville is a follow-up to the one held in Bangui in March 2008. It will mainly focus on information, communication and exchanges of views among participants, in order for all the partners to be on the same footing. Without going into the specific items of the agenda lying in front of you, I wish just to draw your attention to the fact that we will find some time to reflect on certain forest development aspects which are significant for the future of the Congo Basin forests. In particular, we have to specify which role large-scale logging will play in sustainable forest management.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you can see, our task during this meeting is daunting but exalting. In fact it will make or mar the objectives laid down by the Yaounde Declaration. The CBFP must help to set up a forest management which fully benefits the present generations, without jeopardising the forest potential for future generations.

COMIFAC – which is the political and technical orientation, coordination and decision-making body – cannot continue to fully play its role unless significant technical and financial means are

made available to it. Hopefully, bilateral and multilateral co-operations, which announced or confirmed substantial financial contributions, will continue as usual to support priority actions identified in the convergence plan, both at national and sub-regional levels, in conformity with national policies on forest conservation and management. The Congo Basin countries on their part will certainly benefit fully from the innovative mechanisms such as debt cancellation for conservation, long-term loans and carbon credits.

However, for the newly reinforced Executive Secretariat and the restructured sub-regional partner institutions to work smoothly, Central Africa countries must make operational the unanimously adopted autonomous financing mechanism. We seize this opportunity to salute the countries which have already started to apply it. We also welcome with satisfaction the new partners who have joined our initiative and encourage others to follow suit. Finally, we are pleased about the good collaborative atmosphere which currently exists between the Congo Basin countries and the partners.

While reassuring you of the availability of the partners to accompany the new current Chair and the Executive Secretariat of COMIFAC in the implementation of the Yaounde Declaration, I wish our deliberations every success.

Long live international co-operation!

Thank you for your kind attention.

3.2. Opening speech by Yvonne Mboissona, Minister of Water, Forests, Wildlife, Fisheries and Environment of the Central African Republic, current COMIFAC Chair

- **The Executive Secretary of COMIFAC,**
- **The Facilitator of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership,**
- **The Representatives of International Organizations,**
- **The Representatives of Donor Agencies,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
- **Distinguished Guests,**

It is a real pleasure for me to take the floor here in Congo just one month after Bangui, in front of all the larger family of COMIFAC and technical and financial partners on the occasion of the 6th Meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). I very sincerely thank all those who made the trip to Brazzaville in spite of their tight schedule. I extend to them my deep gratitude. In fact their presence here shows their concern for sustainable forest management and conservation in our sub-region.

In fact, this workshop is a follow-up to the one held last March in Bangui, which helped to define the roadmap for the German Facilitation and identify the priority fields of intervention, the major areas of partnership and the leaders of each priority theme. As a result, the financial support recommended by the partners was presented for the various areas of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan for 2008-2009 on the one hand and, on the other hand, a work schedule for partnership facilitation was drawn up based on major events in the sub-region.

COMIFAC countries are fully aware of the need to preserve, manage and use in a sustainable way their forest and wildlife potentials for the socio-economic well-being of the populations. They are also aware of the importance of good governance in the relevant sectors. This salutary vision paved the way for the harmonization of forest policies in our countries.

The objectives of the 6th Regional Advisory Committee in Brazzaville will make it possible for the German Facilitation to take into account this option in the planning and research process for long-term solutions in order to contribute more effectively to the implementation of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan.

- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
- **Distinguished Guests,**

Setting up a legality mechanism is nowadays a requirement for sustainable management of natural resources as recommended by our respective Governments and conservation partners. Sustainable Development has become a priority worldwide and is now a subject of daily concern in every country.

For that reason, while taking over the Chair of COMIFAC, I urge all Member States to undertake various actions in order to achieve the set goal: environmental transparency. I also urge other partners to join the CBFP so that together we can reduce poverty in Central Africa and engage in the process of mitigating the adverse effects of climate change.

The large savannah areas of our countries must be developed under the REDD process. Undoubtedly, COMIFAC countries have the capacities to identify and develop projects which can be included in that framework.

We wish to thank all donor agencies taking part in this meeting for their multiple support for the principles of good forest governance, for transparency in the sustainable management of our forest resources, and for the REDD process.

- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

- Distinguished Guests,

The presence in this meeting here in Brazzaville of so many Experts and Specialists from various backgrounds is a source of diversity and richness. I do hope that the quality and relevance of the proposals resulting from our discussion will meet the expectations of our respective countries.

On this note, I wish our deliberations every success and declare open the 6th Regional Advisory Committee of CBFP

Thank you for your kind attention.

Annex 4 : Tentative Agenda of major up-coming events

Date (day/month/year)	Subject	Venue	Host/Organising institution
Novembre 2008			
05-07/ 11/2008	Proposal by francophone Africa CCC	Dakar	UNDP
06-07/11/2008	Workshop on Land Use Management	Kinshasa	MECNT
18-20/11/2008	Validation Workshop on the state of Forests	Kinshasa	FORAF
21/11/2008	Steering Committee of Central Africa Forest Observatory	Kinshasa	FORAF
10-12/11/2008	Sub-Regional Workshop FRA 2010 « Forest Resource Assessment »	Douala	FAO
10-13/11/2008	GEF Council Meeting (submission of programme for Congo Bassin)	Washington	GEF
mid-november 2008	African position on CCC	Algiers	UNDP
december 2008			
1-4 / 12/ 2008	Coordination workshop on Regional Training Policies	Douala	RIFFEAC
1-12/12/2008	COP Climate / Forest Day II	Poznan/Poland	UNCCC
next year			
<i>January-March 2009</i>	Feasibility study on certification/ perspectives for promoting sustainable forest management in Central Africa	Central Africa	KfW
<i>1-3 March 2009</i>	CBFF 4th Governing Council Meeting (face to face meeting)	Kinshasa	AfDB
<i>April 2009</i>	2 nd Call for CBFF Concept notes	Tunis	AfDB
<i>April 2009</i>	UN Forum on Forests (UNFF)	New York	UN
<i>June 2009</i>	GEF Council / discussions on reconstitution	Washington	GEF
<i>October 2009</i>	2nd conference on forest management and conservation	Bata	Guinée Equ- RAPAR
<i>November 2009</i>	World Forest Congress	Buenos Aires	FAO
<i>November 2009</i>	GEF Council / discussions on reconstitution	Washington	GEF
<i>December 2009</i>	COP Post Kyoto « Climate Change Convention »	Copenhagen	UNFCC

