

**COMIFAC / CBFP / WWF**

# **Congo Basin REDD Donor Dialogue**

## **Meeting Report**

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**NB** Only Annexe 13 is attached to this document.

**All 13 annexes are posted at:**

[http://www.cbf.org/rapports/items/documents\\_redddialogue.html](http://www.cbf.org/rapports/items/documents_redddialogue.html) - French versions

[http://www.cbf.org/proceedings/items/backgrounddocuments\\_reddwashington.html](http://www.cbf.org/proceedings/items/backgrounddocuments_reddwashington.html) -  
English versions

## List of acronyms

AFD	Agence Française de Développement, French Development Agency
CAR	Central African Republic
CBFP	Congo Basin Forest Partnership
CEFDHAC	Conférence sur les Ecosystèmes de Forêts Denses et Humides d’Afrique Centrale, Conference on Ecosystems of Dense Humid Forests in Central Africa
COMIFAC	Conférence des Ministres en Charge des Forêts D’Afrique Centrale ; Central African Forests Commission
CoP	Conference of Parties
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FIP	Forest Investment Programme
GEF	Global Environment Facility
REDD	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN REDD	United Nations Programme on REDD
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature/ World Wildlife Fund

## 1. Introduction

In the search for solutions to combat climate change, the global community has acknowledged that nearly 20% of global emissions are attributable to deforestation and associated land degradation, and that tropical forests are an important contributor to this. The second largest bloc of tropical forest in the world is the Congo Basin, and it is thus imperative to find ways of better supporting the countries harbouring this major forest in the framework of global negotiations, laid out in the Bali Action Plan<sup>1</sup> of December 2007.

At the invitation of the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC) and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, a one-day meeting was hosted by WWF in Washington DC on 23rd October 2008, the purpose of which was to increase mutual understanding about and collaboration between a number of new initiatives that should assist the countries of the Congo Basin to prepare themselves for the REDD process, of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation in line with the Bali Action Plan.

The meeting provided a forum for discussion of how the various initiatives proposed to meet the needs of Congo Basin countries for technical and financial support, and of how they could maintain inter-agency coordination of activities at national and regional levels in order to generate a “whole” that exceeds the sum of the parts, in terms of:

- reducing the risks of global climate change and the impacts of such change on local environments,
- enhancing livelihood security of forest dependent peoples, and
- supporting the sustainable development aspirations of the Congo Basin countries.

Some 65 people representing 45 organisations attended the meeting, including National UNFCCC Focal Points, representatives of multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, philanthropic organization and NGOs. They are listed in Annexe 1<sup>2</sup>.

The sections which follow summarise the main points of discussion at the meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2007/cop13/eng/06a01.pdf>. The plan:  
“1. Invites Parties to further strengthen and support ongoing efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation [REDD] on a voluntary basis;  
2. Encourages all Parties, in a position to do so, to support capacity-building, provide technical assistance, facilitate the transfer of technology to improve, inter alia, data collection, estimation of emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, monitoring and reporting, and address the institutional needs of developing countries to estimate and reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation;  
3. Further encourages Parties to explore a range of actions, identify options and undertake efforts, including demonstration activities, to address the drivers of deforestation relevant to their national circumstances, with a view to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and thus enhancing forest carbon stocks due to sustainable management of forests;  
4. Encourages, without prejudice to future decisions of the Conference of the Parties, the use of the indicative guidance provided in the annex to this decision as an aid in undertaking and evaluating the range of demonstration activities;  
5. Invites Parties, in particular Parties included in Annex II to the Convention, to mobilize resources to support efforts in relation to the actions referred to in paragraph 3 above;”

<sup>2</sup> Available at [www.worldwildlife.org/REDD](http://www.worldwildlife.org/REDD) Congo Basin

## 2. Collaboration and sharing knowledge

The structure of the meeting was designed to share information and to promote increased collaboration - the very purposes of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership. It fulfilled this purpose in a number of ways:

A background paper was prepared, which, amongst other things, summarised in tabular form the new initiatives that will favour REDD and sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin countries. This is available as Annexe 2.

Six of the multilateral initiatives summarised in this paper were described by their promoters to the meeting<sup>3</sup>; a number of international NGOs and philanthropic Foundations also made presentations. These presentations are available as Annexes to this document. These had been placed in context by the Executive Secretary of COMIFAC, who set the scene for collaboration through his description of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan, which was adopted by the signature of all regional heads of state in the 2006 summit held in Brazzaville,<sup>4</sup> and which defines the common objectives of the COMIFAC members. It is currently being evaluated at the end of its first three-year operational period.

Some of the organisations were able to report on agreements already reached, for closer collaboration: these included the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and United Nations programme on REDD (UNREDD).

In the case of remote sensing for emissions monitoring methodologies, the meeting was told that at least at the scientific level all major players are co-ordinating closely; a programme of meetings and other interactions was described. **The role of COMIFAC in supporting this methodological harmonisation needs to be clarified.**

Countries from the region pointed out that international NGOs have an important role to play, as they hold large amounts of data, as well as expertise and practical experience that would be useful to governments and COMIFAC. **Not enough has been done so far to make this available to decision makers in a tangible and useful way.**

Foundations that are considering providing support to the Congo Basin to strengthen capacity for forest conservation and management were urged to first visit the region and discuss its needs.

## 3. Filling Gaps

Among the initiatives featured, a distinction was made between those focussed specifically on REDD "readiness" or related capacity building and others which have broader forest management or sustainable development objectives.

Specific gaps identified in the issues addressed were:

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<sup>3</sup> FCPF, CBFP, AFD-NGO Partnership, World Bank FIP; UNREDD; GEF Congo Basin Programme Framework

<sup>4</sup> Available at: [www.comifac.org/plandeconvergence](http://www.comifac.org/plandeconvergence)

### *Policy formulation*

The countries of the region don't yet have a REDD policy. It is necessary to complete preparatory studies to develop the reference scenarios which will inform the country baselines for quantifying and compensating reductions in forest-based carbon emissions. The FCPF has agreed to support development and implementation of national level 'REDD Readiness Plans' for four of the six Congo Basin countries. The remaining two countries are expected to seek similar support at the next FCPF Partner's Meeting.

A key issue that will determine the extent to which countries with different national circumstances may benefit from Convention-linked carbon finance mechanisms will be the formula adopted for establishing forest based emissions baselines. **To determine where their interests lie in the negotiations over different methodologies for setting baselines, analytical work is needed to model what the consequences will be, in terms of the potential impact on national development, of the various possible REDD methodologies.** Countries will also need technical support to analyse how "carbon assets" linked to convention-sanctioned financial mechanism compare with alternative development options.

### *Civil society participation*

National multi-stakeholder partnerships are needed for sustainable implementation of policies and measures to achieve REDD, and in order to ensure the full participation of civil society. Efforts are needed to overcome the challenge of establishing an appropriate and viable mechanism to ensure civil society representation at local, national and regional levels, and should be informed by the previous experience of CEFDHAC in this regard. Weak civil society engagement in the development of R-PINs was a factor in proposals that failed to gain approval by the FCPF Partners Committee. COMIFAC is already working through a regional initiative to improve civil society representation. This has been a two year process to implement one of the key elements of the Convergence Plan. **Additional partners are needed to support this effort both financially and in terms of outreach to 'hard-to-reach' constituencies.** A first round of national level meetings has been financed; donors are requested to contribute funds toward making the second round of national meetings broader-based and more relevant. Improved public awareness and public understanding of the mechanisms that would be employed to accomplish REDD and the implications for various groups of stakeholders is a critical need.

### *Resource rights*

Formal recognition of rights to carbon assets and the responsibilities that come with these rights is crucial for stakeholders to make informed decisions about participating in REDD schemes. It would be very difficult for REDD schemes to achieve lasting results without the support of informed local communities.

## **4. Strengthening a regional approach**

At the most recent meeting of the COMIFAC Ministers, which took place in September 2008 in Bangui, Central African Republic, the countries of the region agreed to work together to develop a common negotiating position on the successor to the Kyoto Protocol, which is expected to be agreed at UNFCCC CoP 15 scheduled for December 2009 in Copenhagen. This is reflected in the so-called Bangui Declaration. The National Focal

Points called for assistance with policy analysis to improve understanding of the consequences of various possible mechanisms for measuring and compensating emissions reductions through land and forest-based activities in general, and REDD in particular, within a post-Kyoto protocol. Important groundwork has been laid but it is both important and urgent to develop the substance of a regional strategy, that can be introduced and defended in the forthcoming UNFCCC negotiations from now through to December 2009. The strategy should reflect the specific needs and circumstances of the Congo Basin countries, both individually and collectively.

As a regional institution, COMIFAC provides a robust vehicle for achieving consensus among the participating countries. It has already come a long way since its establishment almost a decade ago in stimulating dialog, reflection and achieving agreement on regional priorities for conservation and use of the forest estate. This is formalized in the Convergence Plan, the first phase of implementation of which is drawing to a close. An evaluation report is currently in preparation and will be available at the end of 2008. A second phase will cover the period 2009-11. Reflection is needed on the 'fit' between the donor initiatives and the plan de convergence, and on the extent to which the latter takes into account the objective of reducing carbon emissions. **The outcome of UNFCCC negotiations on the successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol will have a profound influence on activities undertaken with the framework of the PdC.**

The COMIFAC Climate Working Group established three years ago with the support of the CBFP members, has been an important forum for considering new ideas, input and analytical results. This body (formalized in the Bangui Declaration) should be supported strongly as a critical forum for developing a regional position within the UNFCCC.

This meeting was very useful in bringing people together and raising awareness of what is being done. **The dialogue should continue in order to arrive at a common position, leading to action in concert to protect the forests.** Giving a reliable asset value to forest carbon is just one aspect of this. Evaluating the potential impact of the donor initiatives described here and coordination of efforts to realize their full potential will be essential..

A particular concern was expressed that the structure of some initiatives leaves the six Congo Basin countries unable to participate as a common bloc. The FCPF is the only one that supports development of the reference scenarios which will be a pre-requisite for participation in UNFCCC-sanctioned carbon finance mechanisms or markets. **Reflection is needed on how countries can participate in the FCPF as a bloc, in order to ensure consistency and compatibility among the preparation efforts of the six countries.** A discussion is under way between the countries and the FCPF management of the extent to which regional level activities may be supported by the latter. AFD in collaboration with other CBFP members, is preparing a paper to identify options and potential benefits of taking a regional approach to building capacity for "REDD readiness" which is expected to be available for discussion at the next meeting of the FCPF participants in March 2009. In the case of the UNREDD initiative, it will be necessary to ensure that the support this initiative will provide to DRC is fully articulated with the Convergence Plan. The support provided by UNREDD to DRC will be structured in order to benefit other countries in the region by providing a hub for training and dissemination of knowledge and lessons learned from experience in participant countries elsewhere.



## 5. A timetable for Copenhagen

The negotiations of a post-Kyoto protocol are expected to be concluded in December 2009 when the UNFCCC CoP 15 takes place in Copenhagen. To achieve maximum impact and negotiating strength, a regional strategy should be agreed among the COMIFAC members by early spring 2009, in order to gain high level political support within each country and permit coordination with similar regional initiatives that may share common viewpoints in the time available.

While the initiatives represented in this meeting each have an implementation time frame of 2-5 years or more, the time frame for policy engagement is much shorter. The effective deadline for preparing country submissions for formal consideration at Copenhagen is June 2009. Therefore it is essential to distinguish between “time critical” activities related to the negotiations and the important but less time constrained action needed to develop and maintain technical capacities to design, develop, implement, monitor, validate and report on REDD activities that maintain high standards of environmental and social responsibility.

Support is needed at two levels: **policy formulation** in the context of the UNFCCC negotiations, and **implementation of existing policy commitments** under the Bali Action Plan.

[It should be noted in parenthesis that the ongoing process of operationalising the Bali commitments began earlier this year. A “workplan” matrix of activities contributing to this process, developed at a joint working session of National Focal Points and CBFP members in July 2008, was made available to meeting participants. This was further updated during a follow-up session on October 24<sup>th</sup>. At the October 24<sup>th</sup> meeting a draft programme of support to the policy formulation process leading up to Copenhagen was also developed, in the light of the needs expressed at this meeting and reported in section 5.1 below. This document is available as Annexe 12.]

During the meeting, a timeline was created leading up to the December 2009 Copenhagen CoP, and important dates under each of the initiatives were marked out. This timeline has been further elaborated to include the intended dates of events planned under the process of support to the negotiations and to operationalising the Bali commitments, and is available as Annexe 13.

### 5.1 Need for policy analysis support to enable participation in negotiations, November 2008 – December 2009

The region’s negotiators in the UNFCCC process will need support from high level experts who are able, with the country representatives, to identify what the impacts might be from the various relevant propositions that come up during the negotiation process, and to relate these proposals to the conditions and interests of the countries of the region. It was suggested that this might take the form of a scenario -based evaluation exercise. Skills are needed for fine-tuning and evaluating REDD policies. Proposals for the structure of a REDD mechanism are evolving all the time, and so these analytical skills are needed in order to ensure that the countries are able to participate in an informed and constructive way in negotiations. For each possible reference scenario, simulation models are needed in order to identify a corresponding development model and appropriate financing

mechanism, responding to the actual situation in the countries. This would be of significant value in order for the countries to evaluate alternatives and to promote and defend those policies that best serve their interests going forward to Copenhagen.

It is proposed that **an expert group should be very quickly established**, in order to be able to respond quickly to developments during the coming months. Identifying the members of this group is an urgent priority. Some potential members have already been identified at the COMIFAC REDD meeting of 12-14 June 2008: it is necessary to identify others, for those interested to come forward, and to assign roles.

The following sources of available **funding** for the policy process were identified at the meeting:

The GEF has a capacity building programme that can help the climate focal points, these are eligible. There is US\$700,000 in the GEF REDD programme's project preparation fund: some baseline assessments are compatible with the activities on the list.

The AFD-NGO partnership is geared towards supporting the policy process and hopes to be able to provide direct support for meetings, experts and policy analysis. The budget for 2009 for both technical and analytical support and meetings will be approximately \$500,000 for urgent actions at both national and regional scales.

German Technical Co-operation will participate mainly –at least on a short term basis - financially. They intend to continue with co-financing of activities. So far they have committed \$200,000 but are ready to increase this to \$300,000. **Other donors were invited to give this matter their urgent attention.**

## **5.2 Need for longer term support to implement existing commitments under the Bali Action Plan**

Donor countries must decide where best to place their funds in order to enable other countries to participate in activities under the Bali action plan, including REDD and to strengthen their capacity for forest management and conservation in ways that contribute to REDD but that address additional societal and economic needs and values beyond greenhouse gas emissions reductions and climate change.

The discussion among Ministers in Sept 2008, which led to the Bangui Declaration, endorsed the development of self-organising “thematic networks”, linking specialists from the region who are working on particular elements of forest management policy, strategy and methods with international sources of expertise, in order to frame issues and identify options for policy and practice within each thematic area. At a minimum, these networks should include between one and three regional specialists, paired with a similar number of outside experts recruited globally.

Two commitments are necessary in order to move forward with this:

The first is reliable information from partners in order to create an **inventory of activities and proposals for implementation of the Bali roadmap**, including keeping track of new proposals that might come up.

The second is to identify **coordinators** willing to take on the role of assembling thematic groups and sources of necessary financial support.

It was suggested that the **existing lists should be distributed among possible partners and actors, to add other elements necessary, and to invite them to consolidate the road map** – i.e. find out who is really able and willing to contribute. Then **a meeting should be organised** as soon as possible, within the region, where those willing and able to contribute can sit together and decide who is financing what. If gaps are identified, more financing can be sought, otherwise the group can get on with the job. This should also include the policy aspects (as above), so the whole process is as transparent as possible, but analytically the two strands (ie policy support for negotiations and longer term support to implementing the Bali Action Plan) should be kept separate.

**Two or three partners should take on the role of animating and facilitating coordination**, not in the sense of being director of the process, but of facilitating communication. It is essential to **identify who is to initiate the process** of identifying the core group and launching the assessment of what needs to be done that is not already on the list, either in the meeting background paper or in the Accra workshop report. The group will need to include someone from the focal Points technical working group, and its partners.

It was further proposed that a **core group** be created involving **WWF, the World Bank and France along with the existing CBFP technical support unit** to work with the National Focal Points to “map out” the critical path activities for the coming year.<sup>5</sup> Financing and technical assistance partners from the CBFP were invited to declare their ability to contribute to the activities identified by the National Focal Points as high priority and/or time critical.

## 6. Follow up

**A follow-up meeting focused specifically on operational coordination should be organised within the Congo Basin region, involving all the COMIFAC institutions.**

This would bring better understanding among donor agencies of what is going on “on the ground”, as well information on donor activities that national personnel based in the region would find useful. Foundations interested in providing resources would also be better able to identify where their support could be most effectively deployed.

**It was suggested this meeting be held sometime in January 2009 to take stock of priority needs** - in the wake of the December 2008 UNFCCC 14<sup>th</sup> CoP in Poznan, Poland – as well as available resources, and to outline concrete steps to move forward on both the “policy” and “operational” tracks.

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<sup>5</sup> The National Focal Points and others who returned to WWF on the day after the main dialogue meeting ( i.e. on Oct 24<sup>th</sup>), building on the work plan matrices that were begun by the Focal Points during their last joint work session in July, elaborated workplans for both policy and operational levels of support. (See Annex 12). It was recognized that these workplans should be living documents updated as often as resources become available and needs change.

The data gathered together on initiatives as preparation for this meeting may offer a model for developing a **database (or at minimum an index) of donor programmes active in REDD or related activities**. Data on ongoing or planned programs of bilateral and other donor sources would be useful to bring to the table in future gatherings but were not included this time.

Participants expressed the view that **this meeting should be part of a longer term process that takes the region forward**. It was recognized that the CBFP technical support unit and the COMIFAC secretariat could provide the necessary “coordination and convening functions” but that efficient cooperation and collaboration among the range of partners represented at the meeting is required in order to provide the necessary financial and technical support .

A major challenge is the provision of basic public awareness and effective communications – at all levels from high government officials to grassroots stakeholders - about just what is a REDD initiative, what are the implications for various stakeholders, what are the risks and potential benefits, and what is expected of or required by various stakeholders to participate in their respective capacities.

A further challenge is that of maintaining the process that has been initiated, of regular, open communication and co-ordination between donors in the public, private and NGO sectors and those with institutional responsibility for forest management in the region.

The goal of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation over the long term, in a verifiable and sustainable manner, and in a way that brings tangible development benefits to the Congo Basin countries and their peoples, is the challenge and the potential “reward” of the collective “REDD” initiatives enterprise.