

**CONSULTATION MEETING ON REDD FUNDING FOR CONGO
BASIN COUNTRIES
Washington, 23 October 2008**



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Washington, 23 October 2008

**The Facilitator of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP),
The Director of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF),
Distinguished Representatives of International Organizations and Donor
Agencies,
National Focal Points of COMIFAC Countries,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am singularly delighted to be here in Washington for this consultation meeting on REDD funding for Congo Basin countries. I am honoured to take the floor at this event to bid a warm welcome and to wish a pleasant stay in the United States to all participants who graciously travelled to Washington.

Permit me to salute development partners in our midst as your presence attests to the interest you all accord to the issue at hand.

Allow me also to voice COMIFAC's appreciation to Germany, facilitator of CBFP as well as to WWF for their multiform support in the organization of this meeting.

Distinguished guests

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) has been top on the agenda of the international community over the last few years. Indeed, as part of talks ahead of the post 2012 Kyoto regime of the convention on climate change, developing countries have been appealing for the consideration of the role of tropical forests in reversing climate change.

As you are well aware, tropical forests in general, and more specifically, those of the Congo Basin, play a key role in abating climate change and maintaining the world's ecological balance. These forests are strained by wide-scale anthropogenic activities that cause deforestation and degradation and result in the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The expert report on this issue speaks volumes: 20 to 25% of greenhouse emissions from land-use are mostly caused by deforestation in tropical countries.

In spite of this alarming finding, no facility was envisaged in the convention on climate change, to reduce or halt emissions from deforestation and degradation. Yet, in addressing the challenges posed by climate change, combating deforestation and sustainable tropical forest management offer a genuine opportunity to significantly reduce emissions in a cost-effective manner. According to the Stern report, the opportunity cost of halving deforestation in tropical countries hovers at 5 to 10 billion dollars yearly.

It is on the strength of these challenges that COMIFAC countries joined other countries in the Coalition for Rainforest Nations (CfRN) to support the REDD initiative. In fact, since 2006, our countries have been engaged in negotiations for the taking into account of efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and land degradation in developing countries.

The 13th Conference of Parties to the Bali Convention of December 2007 was a highlight of the negotiations. The decision, *inter alia*, to introduce or pursue pilot approaches to estimating carbon emissions from deforestation or degradation has bolstered our determination to carry on with the negotiations.

It is auspicious to restate COMIFAC's gratitude to CBFP partners, namely France and Germany, for availing funds to support COMIFAC countries in this effort.

Ladies and gentlemen

The 15th Conference of Parties of the Convention scheduled for the end of 2009 in Copenhagen is seemingly a turning point in the future of REDD. That is why countries of the Congo Basin should promptly allay a number of concerns on the feasibility of REDD as an additional instrument of the convention. It will require among others, appraising the carbon stock, defining a baseline scenario, assessing changes in forest cover, carbon stocks and associated GHG emissions.

I am pleased to announce that during a REDD meeting convened last July in Paris, a REDD priority action plan, covering all Congo Basin countries, was designed. The action plan identified a gamut of activities and tools to be planned and designed by the sub-region for the ownership of REDD. To ensure the implementation of the said plan, it is important to avail the attendant support.

To support the developing countries in this drive, several international organizations and donors have established or plan to establish facilities to provide financial and technical assistance. A number of such initiatives involve Congo Basin countries. However, to maximize gains from the various support packages, it is essential that to enhance our knowledge of the initiatives and especially strengthen synergies among them to boost their efficiency.

COMIFAC therefore lauds the holding of this consultation meeting because it clearly enables the various stakeholders to showcase their respective initiatives and outline their common actions to support COMIFAC countries.

For its part, COMIFAC will continue, as in the past, to play its role by coordinating all initiatives geared at implementing the Yaounde Declaration on forests and the Convergence Plan.

On this note, I hope that our proceedings will be very productive.

Thank you.