

The Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) Pays Tribute to a builder of Forest and Environmental Training in the Congo Basin, Dr. Ibrahim Sambo souleman

It is with great pain and sadness that the **Forestry and Environment Training Network of Central Africa (RIFFEAC)** and its technical and financial partners have learned of the death of Dr. Ibrahim Sambo souleman, March 31, 2015 in Yaounde, Cameroon, following a long illness, leaving behind his wife, two children, and other members and friend (s). Dr Sambo of Gabonese nationality was born September 23, 1956 in Parakou, Republic of Benin. He earned his Primary Certificate of Elementary School in 1971, the High School Diploma in 1975 and his Bachelor of Sciences in 1978 in Benin. He then obtained his Master of Science degree in 1986 and his doctorate in agronomy in 1989 at the Kuban Agricultural Institute, Krasnodar, Russia. He was a teacher at the National School of Forests and Waters (ENEF) of Gabon since 1990 and Head of Basic Science Department from 1995 until his death. Regarding his involvement in RIFFEAC, the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Jean-Claude Nguingui, described Dr Sambo as an irreplaceable companion who was instrumental at both during creation RIFFEAC in 2001 in Libreville, Gabon and during its growth phase (2011 to date). Professor Francis Tarla, the interim coordinator of RIFFEAC who worked with him between 2009 and 2011 for the advancement of RIFFEAC, for his part, described him as a great man of heart, very determined in the spirit that he could see opportunities where others saw obstacles. Dr Sambo was successively Secretary General of RIFFEAC between 2001 and May 2011 under the regional coordination of the Director General of the ENEF-Gabon, Mr. Athanase Bousseguie. During this initial phase, he worked selflessly for the development of RIFFEAC. The Support Project for the expanded program on natural resource management training in the Congo Basin (PEFOGRN-BC), funded by the Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF), from July 2011 to March 2015 allowed RIFFEAC to move to its growth phase and establish its headquarters in Yaoundé as COMIFAC technical body for the execution of transverse axes of the revised Convergence Plan 2015-2025 (capacity building and knowledge enhancement, research and development, and communication of results). Dr Sambo was RIFFEAC Regional Coordinator May 2011 to 31 March 2015. During this growth phase, he also coordinated the project for capacity building of members of RIFFEAC for the sustainable management of forest concessions training, funded by ITTO and the Support Project to strengthen the training and employment (PARAFE) in the forest area / environment in Central Africa, funded by the French Agency of Development Agency (AFD).

The Université Laval team has met for the first time Dr Sambo in 2005 during the first meeting held at the University of Kinshasa between RIFFEAC and representatives of Université Laval made of the Associate Dean of that time, Professor Eric Bauce today Executive Vice President for Development; Emeritus Professor Marius Pineau and myself. Having shared a night together, I discovered Dr Sambo as his diligent practicing Muslim during evening prayers and morning on his portable mat. The Kinshasa meeting and the meeting that followed with the FAO Representation in the DRC allowed the FAO Department of Forestry in Rome to fund a study on the revival of forestry education in the DRC. The technical report of the FAO co-written in May 2006 by Dr Sambo and

retired professor at Université Laval, Jean Tomlinson, was the supporting document to convince the Regional Program of Central and Western Africa (Praco) of the Canadian International Development Agency, merged since March 2013, within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (MAECD) to finance the project to support the natural resources management training in the Congo Basin (FOGRN-BC) from July 2008 to December 2014. The success of the implementation of this project convinced the CBFF to support the project PEFOGRN-BC-Phase I (July 2011-December 2014) in order to expand the model of FOGRN-BC project tested in three representative countries of the Congo Basin (Cameroon, Gabon and DRC) in all 10-member countries of COMIFAC. As a member of the PFBC, RIFFEAC under the coordination of Dr Sambo has actively participated in all meetings of the PFBC to lead the market for ideas on training in collaboration with Université Laval and the Teaching and Forestry Research Centre of Sainte-Foy Inc. (CERFO).

The success management of PEFOGRN-BC-Phase I project by RIFFEAC and its member institutions in partnership with CERFO and LAVAL, allowed the CBFF on examining the financing of a second phase to consolidate the capacity building of technical and academic institutions to train sufficient numbers of highly qualified personnel, competent, both in professional, technical and university level, able to deploy innovative approaches in the field of rational management of multiple forest and environmental resources, to reduce deforestation, natural resource degradation and poverty in the Congo Basin. During the evaluation mission of this phase II by the CBFF Secretariat at the African Development Bank (AfDB), conducted from 11 to 20 March 2015 in Cameroon, Dr Sambo notwithstanding his precarious state of health, was able to participate in a few key sessions. That is to say that Dr Sambo worked for RIFFEAC until the last moments of his life. We say a big thank you for all this self-giving for a noble cause that inspired him to see RIFFEAC adequately fulfill its mission of Forestry and Environmental Training Platform in Central Africa. To perpetuate the memory of Dr Sambo, a proposal is made to the General Assembly of RIFFEAC to dedicate an annual mobility grant of \$ 5,000, called Dr Ibrahim Sambo Soulemane, which will be granted by the RIFFEAC, to allow a new graduate student selected based on the excellence of its academic record to complete a specialized internship of six months in the subregion in his field of study. We thank the Chairman of the Board of RIFFEAC, Mr Jean-Claude Nguingiri, Prof Tarla, the Interim Coordinator, Joseph Hommerd and the Chief Accountant of RIFFEAC, Joseph Hommerd, to have read and commented on this Tribute note before its publication.

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