

### **Academic Consortium of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership**

The Academic Consortium includes five universities that are full CBFP members, and a number of others present and active in the region. The Academic Consortium continues to foster new research and professional collaborations with universities, governments, and NGOs across the Congo Basin through regional programs such as the Congo Basin Institute, the University of Maryland’s engagement with OSFAC, Laval University’s collaboration with RIFFEAC, the University of Wisconsin at-Madison’s Lwiro collaboration, and the Bioko Biodiversity Program, supported by several institutions including Drexel University. Ongoing consortium goals aim to:

- Enhance and expand relationships with RIFFEAC and other institutions of higher education across the Congo Basin.
- Continue to seek funding from sources that support building conservation and development capacity (including training) of current and future environmental leaders in the Congo Basin.
- Build on current ACCBFP programs (multiple projects in five Congo Basin nations, including the Central Africa Biodiversity Alliance, LAVAL/RIFFEAC, UMD-OSFAC, and CBI) to promote further development of affiliate field research units across the Congo Basin.
- Pledge support of unity to the new CBFP facilitation team to promote higher education and increase opportunities for building capacity across the Congo Basin.

### **Center for International Forestry Research**

The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) has been continuously active in research for development in the Congo Basin since its establishment in 1993. We have contributed significantly to advancing the agenda about the implementation of sustainable forest management through strategic research about multiple-use management, NTFP management, eco-certification, bushmeat, climate change mitigation and adaptation, forest landscape restoration. CIFOR has been very active in the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and in the implementation of several of the convergence plan axes including initiatives such OFAC. Our work with our partners has resulted in several significant improvements in the way forests and forest resources are managed for the benefit of local livelihoods and the environment. We intend to continue and increase our involvement in the development and conservation of the Congo Basin forests for the years to come in close partnership with all relevant stakeholders. We will increase our capacity development activities both formal and informal with a strong emphasis on local researched and institutions. Our main interest will remain centered at climate change adaptation and mitigation, tenure and rights of forest resources, management and certification, wildlife and human well-being.

### **Conservation International**

Conservation International (CI) has over 25 years of experience in the conservation of biodiversity and the provision of ecosystem services with offices in more than 30 countries and investments into more than 1,000 partner organizations and thousands of projects across Latin America, Africa and Asia. CI’s flagship biodiversity conservation programs include projects in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and aim to build capacity of partner organizations to improve environmental governance and develop a network of civil society organizations able to improve land use and natural resource management. The CI/DRC program has a proven history of successful partnership with USAID-CARPE, and has led a consortium of partner organizations working in the MTKB Landscape since 2003, including the *Institute Congolais pour la Conservation de la Nature* (ICCN) and four partner non-government organizations (NGOs) in the implementation of the Central Africa Forest Ecosystems Conservation (CAFEC) Project in the Maiko-Tayna-Kahuzi-Biega (MTKB) Landscape of Eastern DRC.

Since 2009 CI/DRC has been actively engaged in developing REDD+ pilot and REDD readiness projects, building REDD+ capacity and supporting the government’s REDD+ strategy. CI has provided partner training on forest carbon project development, carbon stock assessments and deforestation analysis projections that form the scientific foundation of REDD+ field activities.

Recognizing the critical importance that indigenous peoples play in environmental stewardship, CI created the Indigenous and Traditional Peoples Program (ITTP) to strengthen commitments to indigenous and traditional peoples and support the vital role of their territories in conservation landscapes. This program has benefitted Congolese environmentalists who have gone on to continue work in the environmental conservation field in the DRC. Also, as a member of the Conservation Initiative on Human Rights (CIHR), CI has adopted an institutional rights-based approach (RBA) to conservation, committing to address gender in all stages of the program design cycle and to work with partners to share and promote best practices for incorporating gender in conservation strategies, including those taking place in the Congo Basin.

### **Economic Community of Central Africa States**

In its quest for the transformation of natural capital into productive capital of the member states, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) is developing several innovative tools to achieve green economic growth, including a System of Green Economy in Central Africa (SEVAC). This program represents a vision, a tool, an approach and a model of economic development of natural resources in Central Africa to address several fronts of action: key political, diplomatic, socioeconomic and environmental issues; and a focus on key features (objectives, eligible projects, beneficiaries, sources of funding, governance, board composition and development strategy) of the Fund for the Green Economy in Central Africa (FEVAC) as a follow on from the decision taken by Central African Heads of State and Government of 25 May 2015 in N'Djamena.

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has also been active to stem the tide of growing threats to the region’s wildlife heritage, and has developed the Plan of Emergency Anti-Poaching Action (PAULAB) in areas of savannah and forest of Central Africa. This plan was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 28 April 2015 in Brazzaville and submitted for decision to the Heads of State and Government of 25 May 2015 in N'Djamena.

### **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations**

The Food and Agriculture Organization’s (FAO) assistance over the next few years will support the implementation of the revised Convergence Plan. In the short term, FAO will capitalize on the achievements of ongoing initiatives and will continue its assistance to COMIFAC and its member countries in the development and implementation of national systems for surveillance and MRV (Measurement and Reporting and Verification of REDD+) to fight against deforestation and forest degradation. FAO assistance will be channeled through the CBFF, UN-REDD, and other mechanisms. FAO will continue also to assist COMIFAC and its member countries in strengthening the contribution of forest products to food security and nutrition. A regional program, "Forests for Food Security," is being developed and will provide the framework for the alignment of different initiatives in the NTFP sector, such as the sustainable supply of bush meat, wood processing and energy services – recognizing the essential role forests to regional food security and nutrition. Policy development and forest law enforcement is the third area of FAO support to COMIFAC and its member countries. After working with the DRC and Congo, FAO intends to continue its support to other COMIFAC countries in the formulation of forest policies.

### **Germany**

Germany will continue to be a strong partner for the region of the Congo Basin when it comes to biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of forests. Over the past three years, the German government has significantly increased its activities in support of the COMIFAC member countries' efforts to address the dramatic poaching crisis. Examples include Germany's response to the elephant massacre in Bouba Ndjida national park in 2012, when Germany joined forces with COMIFAC, Cameroon and Chad to launch a new program for transboundary protected area management in the Binational Sena Bouba Yamoussa Complex. Germany will also significantly increase its funding for the protected area of "Trinational de la Sangha." In the field of sustainable forest management, the priority areas of German support in the region will continue to be timber certification, FLEGT, community forestry and REDD(+).

## **Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration**

The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration (GVTC) is a cooperation framework among three countries (DRC, Rwanda, Uganda) to meet the urgent need to sustainably preserve the exceptional biodiversity of the Greater Virunga Landscape (GVL), to assure the socio-economic development of local communities and the promotion of peace in the region. The legal framework for this process is proceeding and may lead to signature and ratification of the Treaty for GVTC by end of the year.

A ten-year Strategic Border Plan has been implemented since 2009 and revised in 2013 with the active participatory both national conservation institutions and international NGOs and local communities. This covers important issues for action and exchange between all stakeholders: focusing on sustainable use of natural resources, tourism, economic development, women's involvement, communication and information, mobilizing financing.

Special attention is given to the establishment of an efficient system of communication and information management as an important nucleus of the Biodiversity Observatory in GVL destined to become a center of Excellence. The diversification of the partnership is needed to strengthen our technical and financial capabilities and to do this we manage all regional and international conventions that our three countries are parties to.

Finally we have the ambition to develop a new model of cooperation in the region for the conservation and sustainable socio-economic development in the GVL based on natural resources for peace between our peoples—a natural landscape dedicated to Peace.

## **The Nature Conservancy**

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is committed to continue supporting Gabon’s priorities towards conservation and management of its freshwater resources and aquatic biodiversity in ways that benefit nature and people. To do so, TNC will provide its scientific expertise and experience from working around the globe, along with its pragmatic and collaborative approach to lasting conservation results. TNC will build upon the first two years of working in Gabon, developing a Freshwater Atlas as a decision support tool, improving the understanding of aquatic biodiversity through field assessments, and testing methods to better understand, map and value ecosystem services. A strong focus in the year ahead will be placed in supporting the management of priority wetlands of international importance (Ramsar sites), and looking at ways to reduce impact on freshwater resources, mainly erosion, that have an impact of water quality, but also on the sustainability of some industrial practices.

## **Observatory of Central African Forests (OFAC)**

As a technical service linked to COMIFAC, the Observatory of Central African Forests (OFAC) is a resource center to share data and information with partners working to monitor and conserve the forests of the Congo Basin. This includes:

- Forest Sector / biodiversity information resources,
- GIS data, and
- Partner information (including databases and partner project data)

OFAC continues to standardize and harmonize data. All data is available to COMIFAC partners through the website (<http://www.observatoire-comifac.net>). Some are often cited by authors and are used for example in drafting the diverse chapters of the State of the Forests report, with the biannual publication coordinated by OFAC (<http://www.observatoire-comifac.net/edf.php>).

### **Satellite Observatory of Central African Forests (OSFAC)**

For over a decade, the Satellite Observatory of Central African Forests (OSFAC) has provided essential services for the conservation and sustainable management of Central African forests. As a Center of Excellence, OSFAC aims to: 1) Promote the use of satellite data in the Monitoring of forest cover and their dynamics; 2) Establish sub-regional operational capacity on the use of earth observation data for monitoring forests and the environment; 3) provide reliable and relevant information for decision making. In coming years, OSFAC will continue to work in collaboration with its strategic partner, the University of Maryland, to:

1. Facilitate access to satellite images of Central Africa through free distribution to users;
2. Strengthen the capacity of national institutions, civil society and NGOs in the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing and digital mapping;
3. Provide data from FACET (Forests of Central Africa Evaluated by Remote Sensing) on the extent and changes in forest cover in the Congo Basin countries through the CARPE III Program of USAID;
4. Encourage the COMIFAC countries involved in the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) to establish reference levels for Forests (NERF), and to establish National Forest Monitoring Systems (SNSF) and Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) systems;
5. Work with OFAC / COMIFAC in the development of the State of the Forests Report (EDF), the premier reference for the Congo Basin scientific reporting; and
6. Support and implement the initiatives developed in the framework of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP).

### **TRAFFIC**

TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, has been engaged in the Congo Basin since the 1990s but only established a physical presence in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in 2008, and in the same year joined the CBFP. In 2011, TRAFFIC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the **Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC)** to support the implementation of its Convergence Plan. Seven years later, TRAFFIC established an additional presence in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). TRAFFIC plans to establish physical presence in several other Congo Basin countries, in the future, as part of its long-term commitment in the

region. TRAFFIC’s commitment in the region is further elucidated by the following ongoing and planned initiatives.

In collaboration with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and other partners, TRAFFIC supported the DRC in developing their National Ivory Action Plan, that outlines urgent measures to be put in place to comply with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) recommendations. The plan was submitted to the CITES Secretariat on 6 April 2015. Further, on invitation by the governments of Cameroon and the DRC, TRAFFIC continues to provide support to the implementation of their National Ivory Action Plans.

TRAFFIC will develop an internet-based toolkit to facilitate information exchange and international co-operation between government wildlife law enforcement officials in Africa. This toolkit is a response to calls from several governments on the need for closer collaboration between wildlife law enforcement officials in the Congo Basin. Seed funds for the development and launch of the toolkit in Central Africa has been provided by the Government of Germany. This toolkit, tentatively named ‘Africa –Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange’, or “Afriq-TWIX” will consist of a mailing list and a database, which access will be restricted to wildlife enforcement officers nominated by partner countries. The planned development of the toolkit has been inspired by a similar toolkit in Europe, called EU TWIX, which has contributed significantly to the fight against wildlife crime over the years. Since the success of “Afriq-TWIX” will depend on the willingness of law enforcement officers to share data and information from their various countries, this announcement is also intended to seek buy-in, support and collaboration from all Congo Basin partner countries. To enable the development, roll out, and sustainability of this toolkit, TRAFFIC would like to use this platform to plead for financial support from both donors and other partners of the Congo Basin, including partner countries.

TRAFFIC will organize an international workshop early next year, within the framework of its Wildlife Trafficking Response, Assessment, and Priority Setting (W-TRAPS) Project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. The workshop will be organized in collaboration with Congo Basin partner countries to review, among other things, the progress made in implementing the Central African Regional Wildlife Law Enforcement Action Plan, referred to by its French acronym, PAPECALF. Finally, TRAFFIC is working with the World Custom Organization to develop a timber identification training manual for frontline customs officials. The manual will be finalized this year and pilot testing will be conducted in three countries: Malaysia, Tanzania and Cameroon.



### United States of America

Since 1995, the U.S. Government has dedicated substantial financial resources to USAID’s Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), to develop a coordinated and comprehensive approach to sustainably manage forests and biodiversity in the Congo Basin. In FY2015, the U.S. dedicated more than \$47.8 million to CARPE. Initially focused on biodiversity and forest conservation, CARPE has become the USG’s main program in Africa for climate change mitigation and our second longest running environment program worldwide.

Under the U.S. facilitation the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) has emphasized, strengthened, and built ties between African institutions and stakeholders; with initiatives, training sessions and dialog to encourage open and inclusive governance, capacity-building and civil society engagement. In this conference’s plenary session, the U.S. will launch the *Prix d’ Excellence* Award to recognize selected leaders’ outstanding work across the region.

The U.S. continues to strengthen and build ties between African institutions and stakeholders to encourage coordinated action for biodiversity conservation and enhanced natural resource management to address critical threats such as illegal logging, wildlife trafficking; and climate change. To tackle wildlife trafficking, the U.S. continues to partner with member countries to address serious threats from poaching, the commercial trade in bush meat, trafficking in wildlife products, and wildlife disease. To address impacts of climate change, the U.S. continues to work with CBFP partners and multilateral donor platforms and private organizations to reduce emissions from deforestation using tools within the REDD+ policy framework, such as SilvaCarbon and other strategic programs to build capacity for monitoring and verification.

### Wildlife Conservation Society

The Congo Basin is one of 15 Global Priority Regions for the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). Highlights of WCS’s continued engagement include:

- We continue to play a major role in the conservation of 18 landscapes in Central Africa and plan to add at least two more in the next year.
- Highlights at these sites will include further developing the newly created Ndoki Foundation, a Private-Public Partnership (PPP) that manages Nouabale-Ndoki National Park in Congo. We are also negotiating a similar partnership to manage the Okapi Faunal Reserve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).
- We will support the creation of two new national parks, in DRC and Republic of the Congo (Congo). Completing the gazettelement process and helping to set up the management structures for these will be a major focus in the next year.
- The Lefini REDD+ project has now been identified by the CN REDD in Brazzaville as a pilot program of the National REDD Strategy and will now enter a new development phase.
- As well as our site based work, a number of cross-cutting programs support our programs and ensuring lessons are learned across the Congo Basin. During the next year we will undertake at least surveys at least 5 sites and the standardised methods which we developed will be used at several more. Major new programs will address the pervasive

threat of an unsustainable bushmeat trade, through protein supplies and reducing urban bushmeat demand.

- The law enforcement monitoring tool, SMART, is now active in 22 WCS supported sites across Central Africa. We will introduce it to at least 2 more in 2015. We have also supported the establishment of a National Coordination Unit in Gabon, and are now supporting the DRC and Congo to set up similar units.
- Over the last 9 months, we have worked with the Governments of Gabon, Congo and DRC in the development of their National Ivory Action Plans, and will now assist in supporting implementation of each of these.

### **Zoological Society of London**

In 2015, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) will undertake innovative interventions in the sub-region, including the outlay of an additional \$700,000 for conservation in Cameroon; continued support for the Dja Biosphere Reserve in maintaining its World Heritage Status through the SMART approach for wildlife monitoring and protection and supporting park management; expanding community surveillance network in the Cameroon TRIDOM to empower local forest communities to take action against commercial scale poachers and supporting freshwater conservation in Cameroon at the Lac Ossa Wildlife Reserve and launching the networks programme to clean up the lake of abandoned nets, recycle them as carpet tiles and provide revenue for local communities

In addition, recognizing that the tropical forestry sector is a key stakeholder with potential to contribute to conservation goals, in 2015 ZSL will expand its support to the forestry sector, developing wildlife protection plans linked to the SMART approach in production forests, targeting 1,136,931 ha of tropical forest in the TRIDOM and TNS inter-zones for conservation management.