



«Efficiency in coordination, mobilization, discussions and communication»

12th CBFP Meeting of Partners (MoP),
March 19 – 20, 2013, Douala, Cameroon

**Main Conclusions of the Committee Chairperson – Dr Hans Schipulle, presented
at the end of the meeting on March 20, 2013**

The 12th Partners' Meeting (PM) of CBFP held from 19 to 20 March 2013 in Douala, Cameroun.

The PM was preceded by a **thematic gender day** and focused on **Gender Mainstreaming** within COMIFAC. It was organized on March 18, 2013 by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). This workshop helped to contribute to the development of a common vision with regard to Gender mainstreaming, to share gender success factors in development efforts via five actual experiences and finally to discuss the preliminary proposals for the elaboration of a draft gender strategy for COMIFAC. These preliminary proposals emerged from discussions held in February 2013 with members of the COMIFAC Gender Ad-hoc Committee (CAG) set up by COMIFAC in 2011, on the one hand, and the Executive Secretary of COMIFAC, its experts and partners on the other. Through these discussions, the strategic guidelines and actions presented in the draft gender strategy were validated. These include, 1) the creation of a favorable environment and adoption of a common vision of gender mainstreaming and its priorities within COMIFAC and 2) putting in place a gender-responsive program while building the capacities of stakeholders both on the national and regional fronts. Finally, following discussions with CAG, it was underscored that CAG participated in drawing up a proposal for its mandate to be updated in order to strengthen its role within COMIFAC, and in drawing up an action plan for the next 6 months in order to complete the elaboration of the gender strategy for its adoption by the COMIFAC Council of Ministers. This action plan includes a national consultative process taking into account realities of COMIFAC Member countries.

Session 1.1 Opening of the PM

The first working session of the PM held on March 19 and dwelled on emerging problems in the Congo Basin.

= Forest carbon stocks =

The first presentation was an overview of negotiations on **REDD+** within the framework of the agreement on climate change and the various international and bilateral programs that aim at building the capacities of COMIFAC member countries in line with the negotiations, while preparing for the implementation of the future REDD+ regime. In analyzing the potential of the mechanisms considered for the economic and social development of countries, and their possible access to international carbon markets, they underscored the importance of preparing for the application of advocated techniques such as the monitoring of carbon flux in forest ecosystems. For these strategies and their results to be concretized, all partners who are equally stakeholders need to be clearly in line with the commitments taken while pursuing an open and active dialogue. At the regional level, CBFP is an ideal platform for this dialogue.

=Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) and natural capital accounting=

Payments for ecosystem services have strong potentials in the Congo Basin, within the domain of climate change mitigation, conservation of biodiversity and watershed protection. A number of constraints need to be addressed however, such as the complicated nature of the market where transactions are concluded, disputes on rights and legality, uncertainty that prevails on the potential impacts of PES on poverty reduction and well-being of the CBFP population.

Natural capital accounting appears to be a vital tool in understanding growth and economic models in the Congo Basin. Several initiatives are underway especially through the WAVE partnership, sponsored by the World Bank. Methodologies of integrated decision support tools are currently being developed.

= WRI Interactive Atlas =

WRI presented an interactive atlas that allows countries at a local level to identify signs of deforestation, within very short timeframes (15 days). This is accompanied by an efficient response from decision-makers. This tool and the applications that could be derived from it could be used to proper effect by sub-regional institutions like OFAC and CICOS.

= **OFAC** =

The Observatory for Central African Forests (OFAC) has clearly shown the importance of its observatory role and its mastery of sector-based data through the support it has offered in ensuring consistency of cartographic data and mapping out geographic borders of Congo Basin States.

Opening of the PM

The session had to be interrupted for the **official opening ceremony of the PM** presided over by Cameroon's Minister of Forestry and Wildlife, **HE Mr. Ngole Philip Gwese**. **Hans Schipulle**, on behalf of the **consortium of former CBFP facilitators**, thanked Cameroonian officials for the warm welcome and the friendly welcome dinner. The presence of this consortium and the holding of the PM supported by German and Canadian authorities, fit into an overall strategy of ensuring the momentum of CBFP in its transitional phase after the Canadian facilitation process ended in late 2012, until the Americans take over the facilitation process in May 2013. The discussions enabled CBFP members to participate in the appraisal of CBFP 10 years after its inception, to highlight their expectations and to reflect on their concrete contributions to attain common objectives.

The SG of Chad's Ministry of Environment, **Mr. Sandjima Dounia**, on behalf of the minister and **current Chairperson of COMIFAC**, dwelled on the achievements of CBFP, especially by laying more emphasis on governance, certification, forest management, commitment to the FLEGT process, implementation of trans-boundary protected areas, commitment to REDD+ and fight against climate change, desertification and soil degradation.

Minister Ngole reiterated that this meeting provided an opportunity to evaluate activities carried out in order to better plan ahead and to ensure continuity of activities. He noted that Cameroon is committed to the governance process through its commitment to the FLEGT action plan, the ratification of the APV/FLEGT in 2011, traceability, and through the launching of a study on the economic importance of the forestry and wildlife sectors in a bid to determine their contribution to the national economy. Cameroon's wish to comply with the commitments taken in the forestry sector can be translated in the regular payment of its contribution within the framework of COMIFAC. As regards the COMIFAC Head Office, the Prime Minister has issued firm instructions for the construction of a new building for COMIFAC and budget line has been secured.

Session 1.2

= **2040 Study on Congo Basin Forests (EFBC 2040)** =

EFBC 2040 is a qualitative prospective study on the possible evolution of Central African forest ecosystems. It underscored that economic dynamics of the sub-region would determine the future of forest areas and that it is necessary to adopt a pragmatic, multi-sectorial, multi-stakeholder approach beyond the forestry sector.

= Network of Central African Protected Areas (RAPAC) =

RAPAC presented two flagship initiatives: The study on «harmonization of laws on protected areas», that is currently being drawn up, which will result in the proposal for guidelines at the regional level, and the regional anti-poaching strategy also underway. In the very short term, to combat the catastrophic effects of large-scale poaching, a major emergency programme to combat poaching will be proposed during the Yaounde meeting slated from 21 to 23 March organized under the auspices of ECCAS.

= Local Development Fund =

The PACEBCo programme, in partnership with SNV, presented the process of setting up a local development fund in the six countries of the Congo Basin. This Fund is aimed at improving living conditions and alleviating poverty. It will have a budget of 3 billion CFA to finance about 300 projects over a 2 year period. The first call for projects will take place in June 2013.

Session 3: The momentum of COMIFAC and its partners

= Major results of the COMIFAC Council of Ministers and their implementation =

Presented by Executive Secretary, Raymond Mbitikon

- The COMIFAC Head Office will be constructed in Yaounde and a budget line has been secured.
- With regard to egalitarian contribution from member countries, Cameroon is the only country to be up to date with its contribution. Equatorial Guinea paid 5 years of outstanding egalitarian contributions. The other COMIFAC member states were encouraged to follow suit.
- The 2013-2014 two-year action plan of COMIFAC was adopted.
- COMIFAC has 4 main priorities for 2013 namely: 1. Revision of the COMIFAC Convergence Plan – 2. Update the monitoring platform of the Convergence Plan – 3. Project monitoring: MRV; REDD... – 4. Emergency conference on environmental crime.
- Sustainable funding of COMIFAC: There is an ongoing internal reflection on setting up a funding programme based on voluntary contributions from donor countries of the sub-region – a subject to be discussed with partners who emphasize that COMIFAC is not an executive agency.
- The Heads of State and Government of Central Africa Summit has been planned for 2013. Negotiations are underway for the holding of this summit and an ad hoc committee will be set up to prepare for the summit once the host country would have been decided on.
- A project has been initiated with Equatorial Guinea, which intends to provide a senior official to strengthen the COMIFAC team and to translate documents into Spanish.

= Sustainability of the Conference on Central African Moist-Forest Ecosystems (CEFDHAC)

This was presented by the Honorable Louis Roger ESSOLA-ETOA, President of the Regional steering committee. The backdrop against which CEFDHAC was created was presented as well as the various sessions held since 1996. The most obvious challenges are a lack of sustainable financing, lack of visibility by CEFDHAC and the fact that national for a need to be revitalized. A Business Plan and Strategy are available and CEFDHAC-COMIFAC needs to be made operational.

These issues were discussed with the assistance and answers of the Chairperson who referred to the principles of subsidiarity and democratic governance that reign within the national independent networks of CEFDHAC:

- Criticism with regard to the implementation of the CEFDHAC reform;
- Role of the political sphere representatives of CEFDHAC;
- Need to review and better understand the texts constituting CEFDHAC;
- Relation with CBFP: How CEFDHAC can play a federating role;
- CEFDHAC should remain a forum for dialogue and adoption of positions to be channeled to CBFP and COMIFAC. It has to develop a more solid basis and increased visibility in order to get strong credibility and ensure its sustainability.

Session 4: A review of CBFP activities and its facilitation after 10 years of existence and successive stages

Session 4 was marked by four presentations namely (i) a presentation of the preliminary results and conclusions of the CBFP review after 10 years of existence and on the facilitation from 2010 - 2012, (ii) expectations of partners on CBFP (iii) proposal to adjust the partners' framework of cooperation and (iv) presentation of the draft road map of the American facilitation from 2013-2015.

1. Preliminary conclusions and CBFP review

After stating the contextual and methodological considerations, the consultants presented the trends that emerged from the study. These trends, which are based on the global objective of the partnership essentially focus on the perspective of the partners, forests and facilitation programme. In this light, 18 markers/indicators are proposed to assess CBFP activities. Based on these indicators, the consultants deemed that the partnership remains vital even if the assessment of its efficiency remains ambivalent. Progress was identified in certain domains notably, dialogue, communication, and sharing of information between partners. However, some weaknesses were identified with regard to the coordination of interventions and aligning support with priorities of governments of COMIFAC member states.

In addition, a summary assessment of the Canadian Facilitation programme between 2010 and 2012 shows that much has been achieved as concerns certain results like assisting member states with their policies and harmonizing them, strengthening governance and consolidating the achievements of CBFP. However, very little progress was identified as regards Canada's support to COMIFAC.

This presentation led to fruitful discussions with a few key messages and proposals arising from the discussions:

- With regard to the multidisciplinary nature of the forestry sector and its multidimensional role, it is necessary to establish partnerships with stakeholders of other forestry-related sectors;
- It is necessary to review the cooperation framework of partners in a bid to further strengthen the efficiency of CBFP. In this light, the consultation system needs to be reinforced by appointing a college of representatives from the diverse categories of partners. Furthermore, coordination of partners' interventions needs to be strengthened as well.

Based on the observations and suggestions of participants, the consultants were asked to take the final version of the CBFP review into consideration.

2. Partners' expectations

Representatives from the four member states of COMIFAC, CEFDHAC (civil society), CIRAD (research institution) and ATIBT (private sector) gave their opinions on what they expect from CBFP. The major expectations are:

- The need to align partners' support with national and sub-regional priorities by referring to national policies and strategies and to the Convergence Plan;
- The need to strengthen partners' support to countries and other stakeholders by focusing on the participation of all stakeholders;
- The need to set up a regional network on forestry research in order to link national research institutions in a bid to better align supplies with the needs of countries of the sub-region with regard to research.

3. Proposal to adjust the «Cooperation framework»

Some aspects of this framework were presented by Mr. Hans Schipulle who called for an improvement in the contribution of partners. These contributions should be channeled to the consortium of former facilitators for them to be recorded and presented during the next PM. It should be noted that the framework of cooperation would remain flexible for Type II partnerships.

4. The facilitation vision of the USA for the 2013-2015 period

This was aimed at presenting the objectives and activities envisaged by the USA. It was agreed that the road map draft should be commented on by all partners so the US can consolidate it.

It can be concluded from these discussions that participants expressed satisfaction with the arrival of the new Facilitator and the pertinent proposals aimed at strengthening CBFP. Participants were asked to forward their observations to the future Facilitator whose address will be published on the CBFP website alongside the presentation.

Session 5 : International dialogue on forest resources within the framework of Conventions

During this session, representatives of the three COMIFAC thematic working groups made presentations on the agreements on climate, biodiversity and desertification, and pave the way for negotiations.

There has been an appropriation of the three agreements by countries of the sub-region through actions such as setting up three groups, preparing common positions, drawing up national action plans, building sub-regional cooperation to implement cross border initiatives, the involvement of civil society and partners in the process...

The following observations were deduced from the presentations:

Participants:

- Encouraged COMIFAC member countries to mobilize the resources needed to increase the number of experts such that they can participate in various meetings aimed at negotiating the three agreements;
- Underscored the importance of better institutional coordination in order to ensure the effective implementation and complementarity of the three agreements;
- Underscored the need for effective correlation between the networks, for instance, the regional networks of CEFDHAC and the thematic work groups with regard to the three agreements;
- Underlined the need to develop and implement communication strategies on the implementation of the agreements in Central Africa;
- Called on member states and technical partners to mobilize adequate financial resources to render the agreements efficient at the sub-regional level;
- Recommend that experts' capacity on environmental negotiations be reinforced taking into account the Gender issue within COMIFAC working groups.