

Joint Declaration of Intent
on REDD+ in the CONGO BASIN
Between Central African and Donor Countries

December 7, 2011



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Preamble

1. *Recognizing* the vital role that tropical forests play in addressing climate change and the critical importance of the Congo Basin as the second largest tropical rainforest in the world, with more than 200 million hectares of largely intact forests that are rich in biodiversity, located in a region inhabited by more than 120 million people, the majority of whom are dependent upon forests for their livelihoods;
2. *Recognizing* the crucial importance of reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in addressing climate change, as well as the crucial role that forests play in providing basic ecosystem services (notably water resources, soil protection, and biodiversity) and in improving the living conditions of populations in tropical forest countries;
3. *Underlining* the need to improve forest governance, addressing land tenure issues in accordance with national circumstances and to strengthen institutional capabilities at all levels for progress to be made and to scale up REDD+ support over time;
4. *Recognizing* the efforts made by Central African countries over the last decades to improve forest management through the development and implementation of national plans and the Convergence Plan of the Commission on Central African Forests (COMIFAC);
5. *Recognizing* also the efforts of bilateral as well as multilateral development cooperation such as the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), the United Nations REDD Programme (UN-REDD), the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), the Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the Forest Investment Program (FIP);
6. *Recognizing* our common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and our joint determination to take action, we acknowledge the importance of ongoing high-level political dialogue to achieve the shared political will needed to succeed;
7. *Stressing* the crucial role of REDD+ in meeting the objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the global effort to preserve the remaining tropical forests of the planet and that REDD+ is a long-term development choice that requires innovation to achieve sustainable economic growth;
8. *Affirming* our will to operationalize the *Cancun Agreements* on REDD+, we are conscious that we will be working under uncertain conditions – but we understand that the global challenges posed by climate change require courage and determination to act now, even in the face of uncertainties, and that our REDD+ strategies and approaches will need to evolve over time;
9. *Recalling* that, in accordance with the *Cancun Agreements*, scaled-up, new and additional, predictable and adequate funding shall be provided to developing countries, taking into account the urgent and immediate needs of developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change;

The Central African and partner countries listed below endorse this Joint Declaration of Intent.

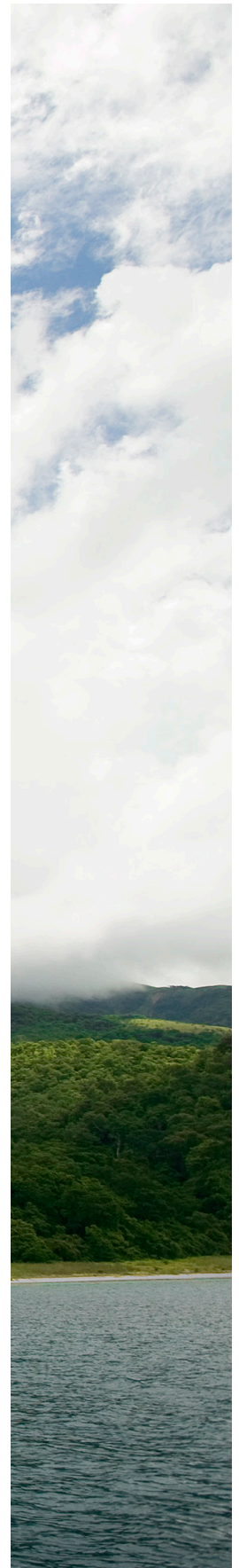
Objective

10. The objective of this Joint Declaration of Intent is to stimulate progress on REDD+ activities in the Congo Basin by drawing upon existing institutions and initiatives to support the development and implementation of national REDD+ strategies, aiming specifically at:
- i. accelerating the implementation of REDD+ in the Congo Basin with the ultimate objective of sustainably managing forest ecosystems in order to stabilize forest cover and reduce carbon emissions taking into account the development needs of the region; and
 - ii. strengthening the promotion and implementation of REDD+ in the Congo Basin by means of ambitious, pragmatic and close cooperation through political support and increased mobilization of financial and technical resources.

Intentions

A. Central African Countries

11. We, the Central African COMIFAC-member countries supporting this Declaration underline our willingness to move forward with REDD+, each according to our individual abilities and specific conditions and recognizing the need to build capabilities and put in place enabling institutions where they are currently lacking. Over time and at an optimal pace that reflects our national circumstances, all the Central African countries supporting this Declaration are prepared to:
- i. develop policies, strategies and programs for sustainable development (green economy) that include “low-carbon” development approaches for all key sectors including forests, agriculture, energy, mining and transportation;
 - ii. develop REDD+ strategies that address the main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, including strategies that require cooperation and coordination across national borders;
 - iii. strengthen forest governance through, *inter alia*, Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), and by focusing on strengthening the capacity of key institutions to promote adherence to applicable international fiduciary, social and environmental standards;
 - iv. establish mechanisms for the full and effective participation of stakeholders;
 - v. pursue land use planning and zoning processes that are participatory and holistic;
 - vi. systematically strengthen and achieve sustainable human and institutional capacities;
 - vii. establish monitoring, and measurement, reporting and verification systems for REDD+, including the safeguards as described in the *Cancun Agreements*; and
 - viii. use existing mechanisms such as the Voluntary REDD+ Database, and National Programs, to estimate the resources needed to achieve these objectives based on the unique circumstances of each country.





B. Partner Countries

12. We, the partner countries supporting this Declaration, are jointly prepared to be reliable partners for the Central African countries participating in REDD+, each according to our individual abilities and circumstances, by:
 - i. gradually increasing and scaling up the total overall level of technical and financial support available for the development and implementation of the REDD+ strategies of Central African countries in a way that is transparent, sustainable, predictable, and results-oriented and consistent with domestic budget and appropriation processes;
 - ii. working both regionally and in-depth with individual Central African countries, as appropriate for each partner, and building upon existing multilateral and bilateral relationships; and
 - iii. providing support that is effective, efficient and progressively more coordinated by mobilising the comparative advantages of each partner country in a collective effort to maximise the benefits to the Central African countries participating in REDD+.

C. All Countries Endorsing This Declaration

13. We underline the importance of sound investments to establish and develop the institutions and mechanisms that will enable a results-based approach. We also underline our willingness to utilize such an approach, with the objective of providing incentives for measurable performance in reducing or avoiding emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.
14. As set forth in Annex I of the *Cancun Agreements*, we strive to apply fiduciary standards and environmental and social safeguards, and to assure the full and effective participation of stakeholders at all levels.
15. We recognize the important role that multilateral, regional, bilateral and national institutions, the private sector, and civil society organizations, especially those that represent indigenous peoples and people dependent on the forests of the Congo Basin, will play in ensuring the design and effective implementation of robust REDD+ strategies and programmes. We are prepared to actively and constructively work with them in our efforts to develop and implement credible and inclusive national REDD+ strategies.
16. This Declaration reflects a genuine and mutual understanding of the countries who endorse it and, while it does not give rise to binding rights or obligations, we underline our determination to take action consistent with this Joint Declaration of Intent and to regularly evaluate our efforts, using established forums such as CBFP and the UNFCCC's Conference of the Parties, in order to maintain the political momentum necessary to ensure the success of our joint efforts.
17. We intend to follow-up on this Joint Declaration starting in early 2012 in order to convert our intentions into actions that will advance REDD+ in the Congo Basin either through bilateral and/or multilateral cooperation.
18. This Joint Declaration of Intent will remain open to the endorsement of other countries and the current supporters appeal to other partner countries to join us in stimulating progress on REDD+ activities in the Congo Basin.

Country endorsement in Durban, South Africa, during the 17th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, on 7 December 2011:

Central African Countries



Burundi



Cameroon



Central African
Republic



Chad



Democratic Republic
of the Congo



Republic of
the Congo



Rwanda

Partner Countries



Australia



Canada



France



Germany



Norway



United Kingdom



United States



European
Commission