

Reinforcing Regional and International Collaboration for Sustainable
Natural Resources Management in the Congo Basin
The Case of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership

By
John B. Flynn PhD
Director, Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment
USAID/Central Africa

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Introduction and Background

The State of the Forest

The world's tropical forests have been reduced to about 55 percent of their original cover, with an estimated 100,000 square kilometers being lost each year. The Congo Basin contains about 20% of the world's moist tropical forests. Because the region's forest stock is vast and population density relatively low, deforestation rates are relatively low in comparison with other areas of the tropics; less than 2% from 1990-2000 (NASA 2008), for example, to 1 percent annually in coastal West Africa (FAO 1992). However, in terms of actual area cleared annually, the forest loss in the Congo Basin is substantial, corresponding to 21,668 square kilometers for the ten-year period (Lindquist, 2008, unpublished).

Deforestation in central Africa is primarily the result of unsustainable agricultural and logging practices, although fuel wood and charcoal consumption around densely populated areas are contributing factors. While most of the forests of central Africa have, so far, experienced lower rates of clearing than other tropical forests, they represent a huge economic resource certain to be utilized. In comparison with West Africa, which has already lost much of its forest area, central Africa presents an opportunity to avoid the social, economic, and environmental costs of forest loss and degradation.

Clearing for agricultural purposes is the predominant cause of deforestation in Central Africa. Increasing population pressures are undermining the sustainability of centuries-old systems of shifting cultivation. At the same time, migrants or settlers from outside the forest regions are introducing cultivation practices that are unsuited to local conditions. Faced with diminishing returns, many farmers choose simply to relocate to areas that have been opened up by logging or infrastructure development. The result is an agricultural frontier that advances at the expense of the receding forest. Urban fuel wood requirements also put pressure on nearby forests. In the larger metropolitan areas, such as Kinshasa, Brazzaville and Yaoundé, the pressure has resulted in the creation of "urban halos" of deforested land stretching over 150 kilometers from city centers.

Commercial logging poses a serious threat to the forest resource base given the unsustainable and inefficient approaches used. The World Resources Institute estimates that about 50% of Central Africa's forests are under logging leases. This fact means that the

commercial logging sector must be involved and cooperate in order to bring about forest conservation and sustainable use at the landscape scale. The value and diversity of timber species makes the Congo Basin the last potential source for large-scale logging in Africa. The thirty species of high value timber found in Congolese forests are being harvested at clearly unsustainable rates in some areas, and there are few incentives to do otherwise given current policies. While logging companies generally harvest only the most valuable trees, the extraction and transportation of those trees causes significant collateral damage to the forests. Furthermore, the logging roads that are constructed open up formerly inaccessible areas to people who clear the land to establish farms and hunt wildlife.

Government policies in forest management, under pressure from the international donor community, have been evolving rapidly, and are under more intense scrutiny by civil society. The long-term effect of this may be positive; there are good laws, but lawmakers and law-enforcers have been breaking them with impunity for years. This cycle can only be broken when the broader society lets it be known that they will no longer tolerate the destruction of their natural resources.

A number of regional, inter-governmental initiatives in forest conservation and management have gathered pace amongst the countries of the region, which fall into two broad groups: the forested countries, with a well-developed logging industry, of which there are six; and those without, of which there are three. These initiatives have fostered a real spirit of collaboration and common purpose among the nations of Central Africa. International agencies and NGOs active in the field (frequently in the remotest of locations) have played their significant part in this development. A constructive dialogue has emerged in Central Africa between forest conservation agencies and logging companies, particularly those based in Europe. This is leading to a much broader approach to the management of forests, and a converging vision about its future.

Key Issues in Forest and Biodiversity Conservation

Loss of Biological Diversity

Biological diversity, or biodiversity, is the variety and variability of life, including the diversity of genes within species, the diversity of species, the diversity of communities and ecosystems, and the diversity of ecological processes that both support and result from this diversity (USAID, 2002). Biodiversity is the foundation for the Earth's essential goods and services. It provides both material and nonmaterial values and benefits. Biodiversity conservation is important for sustainable development because biodiversity is the natural biological wealth that supports human life and well-being. Biodiversity is being lost at an unprecedented rate. Human activities are driving many species to extinction and damaging or converting natural habitats around the world.

The tropical forests of the world provide major ecological services to humans as watersheds and carbon sinks that buffer regional and global climates. These forests also contain a diversity of species far out of proportion to the area they occupy, an estimated 50 to 90 percent of the world's land species. Some scientists believe that 25% of the world's plant

species, and higher proportions of vertebrate and invertebrate species, could die out over the next three decades unless rainforest deforestation rates are slowed immediately. This loss of species will eliminate genetic and biochemical information that could lead to advances in medicine, agriculture, and industrial technology.

Africa's biological resources -- its crops, livestock, fisheries and forests -- are among its most important resources. They yield food, fiber, and fuel that the population needs, and provide the exports and jobs that are the bedrock for broad-based, sustainable growth. The loss of biodiversity would clearly threaten Africa's long-term development. For those living in the region, the most fundamental value of biodiversity is its integral role in the vitality and resiliency of the ecosystem upon which their livelihood depends.

The rainforests of central Africa form one of the planet's last great tropical wilderness areas. The Guineo-Congolian Regional Center of Endemism, as this region is also known, was the area from which much of Africa's existing biological diversity originated. Of an estimated 8,000 species of plants, perhaps 80 percent are endemic to the region. It is also the richest area for fauna in terms of numbers and level of endemism, with 655 species of birds (36 percent of which are endemic) and 58 species of mammals (45 percent of which are endemic). Of these, 16 species of birds and 23 species of mammals are considered threatened or endangered. The region supports the world's largest populations of lowland gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos (pygmy chimpanzees), and forest elephants.

Regional Climate Change

Between 75% and 95% of the rainfall in the Congo Basin is estimated to come from recycled water generated by evapo-transpiration within the region. This differs dramatically from other major tropical watersheds of the world. The Amazon Basin, for example, recycles only about 50% of its water, and Asian rainforests may recycle less than 20%. Thus, Central African rainforests are probably more sensitive and less ecologically resilient than other tropical moist forests. Continuing deforestation in the Congo Basin may set in motion a negative feedback cycle in which forest regeneration is threatened by a regional decrease in precipitation. Decreasing rainfall and its increased variability have contributed to economic and political instability over much of Africa over the decades, and in Central Africa it would likely do the same.

Global Climate Change

Human activities are rapidly increasing the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane, and other "greenhouse" gases in the atmosphere. By trapping the sun's heat, these gases produce a greenhouse effect that may change the Earth's climate, increasing temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and raising sea levels. Scientific advisory committees to the United Nations and the National Academy of Sciences have estimated that the global mean temperature could rise by 1.5 to 4.5° C by the end of the century, assuming the continuation of current trends. In comparison, the earth's mean temperature has risen only 0.3 to 0.6° C in the last century, and probably has not varied by more than 1-2 degrees over the last ten thousand years. Although the magnitude, rate, and geographic distribution of potential

climate change are uncertain, their impacts are likely to be far-reaching and damaging over the long-term. Increasing temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, and other associated environmental changes are likely to seriously disrupt ecological communities and agricultural systems. People in developing countries, who are often dependent on natural resources for survival and who often live at the margins of subsistence, will be especially vulnerable to these disruptions. Environmental and social problems in regions already under stress will only be exacerbated by global climate change. In addition, most developing countries lack the technical and financial resources needed to adapt to, and protect themselves from, the impacts of climate change.

Central African forests represent a vast reservoir of carbon, over half of all vegetative carbon on the continent. Present deforestation rates in Central Africa -- and therefore greenhouse gas emissions from this source -- are modest compared to some parts of the world. Nevertheless, the estimated loss of more than 100,000 square kilometers of Central African forests in a decade (FAO 1992) represents a significant release of greenhouse gases. If clearing rates continue to rise, a substantial amount of the carbon currently locked up in these forests could be released into the atmosphere in the form of CO₂, thus contributing significantly to global climate change. Forest regeneration and growth, on the other hand, may also allow these forests to take up and store ("sequester") significant amounts of carbon, thus reducing the rate of increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere caused by fossil fuel burning.

Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation Avoided

The fight against climate change has highlighted forest conservation on the international environmental debate. Recent international fora have discussed new market-based instruments (such as the international Emissions Trading Scheme and the Clean Development Mechanism) as a means of addressing climate change while conserving forests. The reference in the final declaration of the Bali conference to an international payment mechanism known as "Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation Avoided" (REDD) is being widely discussed. Essentially, REDD proponents expect that some form of compensation in exchange for conserving forests will be arranged.

Whether a REDD approach will be effective in both conserving forests and fighting climate change is a complex subject and open to considerable debate, especially given the complexity of factors causing deforestation. Economic policies, exogenous variables such as interest rates, currency exchange rates, agricultural policies, relative factor and product prices, world demand for biofuel and animal products among other variables influence changes in forest cover. The issue of political economy and thus the way in which states might react to contradictory incentives and pressures is unknown. Many "methodological questions" need solving for REDD compensation measures to work. These are likely to rely less on technical solutions than political choices and arbitrations inasmuch as adopted rules will create winners and losers in what appears to be a new type of rent from which no heavily forested country wants to be excluded. (From: Proceedings of the International Workshop on "The International Regime, Avoided Deforestation and the Evolution of Public and Private Policies towards Forests in Developing Countries")

Edited by A. Karsenty, S. Guéneau, D. Capistrano, B. Singer and J.L. Peyron, April 2008). Nevertheless, if such mechanisms were adopted, they might provide incentives and new sources of financial support for forest conservation in Central Africa

The “Bushmeat Crisis”

One of the most severe threats to many large- and medium-sized mammals in Central African forests is uncontrolled hunting to supply “bushmeat” for urban markets and laborers working in the logging and mining industries. Dramatic reductions in mammal populations, the “defaunation” of forests, could lead to ecological disruption of these complex forest ecosystems, damaging their ecological resilience and natural regeneration capacity by eliminating pollinators, seed dispersers, and predators that keep the populations of herbivores in check.

Besides the risk of unpredictable ecological changes to forest ecosystems, there is also a fear that bushmeat hunting and trade contributes to the emergence of viral diseases into the human population, such as HIV/AIDS, monkey pox, Ebola and related hemorrhagic fevers. HIV appears to have been transmitted to humans by wild chimpanzees, for example. Some populations of wild chimpanzees tolerate the closely related SIV virus with few apparent harmful effects, and medical researchers also are concerned that the bushmeat trade will eliminate these populations and the potentially invaluable information they could provide that might help in the discovery of a cure for AIDS. The pool of viruses resident in wildlife populations, and especially in primates, creates substantial threat of zoonotic diseases transmissions from animals to humans through active hunting and consumption of wildlife. The bushmeat issue is thus an issue of global concern. Better management and supervision of logging sites and long-term efforts to reduce urban demand for bushmeat are both needed to mitigate this critical threat to biodiversity.

The People of the Congo Basin

(Adapted from “The Forests of the Congo Basin, State of the Forest, 2006)

Around 30 million humans, in over 150 ethnic groups, live in the forests of Central Africa at present. However, their presence in these forests goes back to widely varying periods. Traces of human occupation several hundreds of thousands of years ago have been found in several places in the present massif. It is probable, however, that for a very long time these populations lived in patches of savannah, at the edge of dense forests or along the major watercourses and it is very difficult to determine now exactly when humans began to live in the heart of the forests. But we do know that the Pygmies, who represent populations particularly well adapted to the forest environment, have existed for 20,000 to 25,000 years. The Bantu populations, originally Neolithic and later metallurgists, penetrated the forest massif from the North-West. Around 4,000 BP, they crossed the Sanaga and, around 2,500 BP, they occupied almost all Lower Guinea. By about 1,000 BP, the whole forest massif was colonized. In the North and the East, however, Ubangi and Sudanic elements mixed with the Bantu migrations and influenced

local cultures. Unlike the situation in Amazonia, the majority of the populations still living in these forests are therefore indigenous).

Interrelations

For 15,000 years, the Pygmies were probably the only ones living in the forest. With the arrival of Bantu farmers, complex relations developed between hunter-gatherers and farmers. The former knew the forest better but suffered from the scarcity of carbohydrates; they started to exchange forest products such as meat, fish or honey, and labor for products rich in carbohydrates or, more recently, manufactured products. The widely dispersed groups that can still be found today are distinguished by the degree of nomadism and dependence on farmers.

Traditional agriculture in African forests developed on the basis of a long cycle forest clearance, cultivation, fallow periods and secondary reforestation followed once again by forest clearance. In the Neolithic, the oil palm *Elaeis* and yams *Dioscorea* sp. played an essential role. 2,000 to 2,500 years ago, the banana from Asia was added to this and 400 to 500 years ago came plants of American origin, mainly manioc, beans, peanuts, maize and sweet potatoes. This diversification changed the agricultural landscape, transformed habits and led to a population increase. Given the poor fertility of the soils in dense rainforests in Africa and the low productivity of the tropical forest in general, the populations of a large proportion of the forest massif continued to depend on the forest's natural resources. Consequently, the traditional lifestyle of hunter-gatherers and farmers is sustainable only in a situation of low human population density – probably less than 4 inhabitants/km² – and the use of natural resources solely for local consumption. It was only in the high altitude regions of Cameroon and the East of the DRC that more productive agriculture was able to develop, often completed by stock farming, and higher population densities appeared.

Distribution

In the low-altitude regions, the largest human populations are spread along the edges of the forest massif (Figure 2.3), especially where the forests adjoin savannas. Other populations are concentrated along the major navigable watercourses, like the Congo River, from Kinshasa to Kisangani, and the Ubangi. These watercourses have thus always been important routes for communication, trade and transport, providing the local populations with food and various goods.

Indigenous populations

In Amazonia, the indigenous Amerindian population represents less than 1% of forest dwellers. The remaining 99% originated from Europe, Africa or Asia. This situation led to the development of socio-political and environmental movements which for several decades have been working to protect these native populations. Similar movements also developed in certain parts of south-east Asia and in Africa. However in Central Africa the situation is different: populations originating outside Africa represent only a tiny fraction of the total population. All forest dwellers have been living in the forest and its immediate surroundings for more than 1000 years. Despite this, the term 'indigenous population' is used to describe nomadic (or semi-nomadic) hunter-gatherers in Central

Africa. The term includes certain groups of Pygmies (Figures 2.1 and 2.2) even though some Pygmies have abandoned their hunter-gatherer livelihoods and become sedentary. Some Pygmies groups are also now mixed with Bantus, and certain Bantu groups have integrated Pygmies into their communities.

Defining Conservation Priorities

Conservation began in Central Africa towards the end of the 19th century. The first elephant reserve was established in 1889 and the mountain gorilla became fully protected since 1912. National parks started being established as from 1925, but until the 70s they remained centered essentially on the savannas and their mega fauna¹. Forest protected areas were only established from 1970 onwards, with the creation of the Salonga National Park in the DRC. Their number increased during the 80s at the same time as industrial logging activities, which until then had been limited to the coastal regions and along the major watercourses, started to spread across the whole of the interior of the continent. Today, about 18.5 million hectares of forest are included in national parks or other important protected areas.

Changing approaches

Taking ecosystems into account

Conservation based solely on the large charismatic species and the creation of national parks has proved inappropriate in forest environments. Firstly, the experience acquired shows that most national parks, except for the largest and best protected, are too small to conserve in the long term their full range of species and ecological processes. Maintaining the functions, structure and viability of ecosystems means thinking and acting on the scale of entire ecosystems. Secondly, it has been realized that the large dense forests, including the most remote and the most intact, are all inhabited by human populations to whom they provide essential subsistence resources. Successful conservation outcomes require both sustainability at the ecological level and acceptance at the social level. Strategies must incorporate very diverse objectives with respect to protection, commercial exploitation, subsistence, agriculture, industry and urban development through a complex matrix of utilization of land and resources. Focusing on charismatic species (Figure 3.1) has therefore had to give way to a much more global vision of ecosystems: the human populations have had to be taken into account and conservation has had to be envisaged on a scale going well beyond that of protected areas, however large they may be.

The advent of regional programs

All this required a pooling of efforts that only a regional vision could guarantee. Thus it was that regional programs made their appearance encompassing broad-scale conservation programs, the management of protected areas, and management of extraction or production areas and links to rural development. In 1992, the ECOFAC program was launched, financed by the European Development Fund (EDF). Initially, it intervened in six countries and in 2006 it entered its fourth stage, taking in the DRC. In

1995 the USAID Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), planned for 20 years, was launched.

Defining priorities

In practice, the lessons of the ECOFAC program, the CARPE activities and the initiatives of some major NGOs involved in conservation and sustainable management of forests in Central Africa very quickly revealed that priorities had to be determined. The forest massif is too vast and the available funds too limited. Urbanization, the natural loss and degradation of habitats have also created vast areas where the ecosystems no longer function or function very poorly, where the fauna has disappeared and the biodiversity has been impoverished. Moreover, with a population growth of around 3% in the Congo Basin, and with timber and mineral reserves among the richest in the world, the Central African nations are obliged to reconcile the integrity of ecosystems with human use. Unfortunately, this massif is very complex and too poorly known for the priority conservation areas to be easily identified. In order to address this problem WWF organized a workshop in Libreville in March-April 2000 in which over 160 national and international experts in natural sciences and human sciences participated. The formal and informal knowledge that was gathered made it possible to identify and map the most important sites for biodiversity conservation in Africa. Some priority sites cover or harbor existing protected areas; some are located totally outside the protected area network.

The Landscapes concept

On the initiative of the CARPE program, the priority sites were grouped together on the basis of their representation, the viability of their populations, the sustainability of their ecological processes, their integrity and the resilience of their ecosystems, into large relatively intact areas: the 11 **Landscapes**. These constitute the basic units for conservation planning and implementation. They form a vast network, often crossing national borders. Through the *Plan de Convergence*, COMIFAC adheres to the concept that defining priorities on a world or continental scale and implementing at the Landscape level offers the best chances of success in conservation projects. The Libreville meeting, however, focused on low-altitude forest ecoregions, while the region of the Albertine Rift with its afro-montane forests was addressed within the framework of the ARCOS initiative, whose conclusions were not taken into consideration in the choice of the Landscapes. However it is well known that this mountain region, situated at the transition between Central Africa and East Africa, contains environments of great conservation interest. Various partners are also active in this area. Consequently, a 12th Landscape was added to the original 11: the Virunga Landscape, centered on the Virunga National Park in the DRC.

Every Landscape is centered on one or more hubs—generally protected areas—where biodiversity conservation takes priority over other forms of land use. If possible, these hubs are linked by corridors so as to combat fragmentation, which is considered to be one of the main threats to biodiversity in tropical forests. Around the hubs, most Landscapes

include industrial extraction areas—forest concessions and/or oil concessions—and rural areas with community forests. With an average area of 62,314 km² (ranging from 26,746 to 141,096 km²), these Landscapes are sufficiently large to cover the territories used by species such as the forest elephant, large hornbills or the giant tiger fish and to conserve viable populations of rare species or species needing large spaces. In fact, each Landscape corresponds to a vast ‘ecosystem’ comprising intact hubs comprising priority areas for conservation and areas of human use with increasing impact towards the edge.

The threats to the hubs, which mainly come from peripheral areas around Landscapes can be systematically identified and corrective measures can be planned. A good knowledge of the biological and human components of the Landscapes, obtained through discussions with governments and the local populations, research and on the ground experience, can help those involved to develop and negotiate land use plans including areas to be used for subsistence and commercial exploitation areas. The interest of the Landscape concept lies not only in the fact that it incorporates protected areas in a wider context but also and above all in that it involves the communities that act on these protected areas, directly or indirectly, in the conservation processes. Successful conservation relies essentially on the creation of strong human relations among the main players within the Landscape. These relations must be based on mutual respect, trust and common interests. Inside well-defined Landscapes, all those involved can be identified and engaged. They can take part in the negotiations as primary designers and implementers of land management plans based on a sustainable common future (in both ecological and social terms). This approach aims at obtaining not only acceptance but also appropriation of conservation principles by the local communities.

Donor and Host Country Relationships

A wide range of donors is involved in Central Africa and many or most are members of or associated with the CBF. Several categories of donors can be identified:

- bilateral aid agencies, such as USAID, GTZ, CIRAD, DFID
- international and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, EU, GEF, UNEP, UNDP, FAO, CIFOR, ITTO
- nongovernmental organizations or foundations who bring their own or leveraged resources to bear on issues in the region, such as WCS, WWF, AWF, and CI

Because the donor organizations themselves are so diverse they use a wide variety of mechanisms for promoting their agendas, including loans, policy reform programs, direct financial support, training and capacity building, and so on. Some of these donors are involved in forest and biodiversity activities in Central Africa. Some of these donors, in particular the conservation NGOs, are also USAID’s partners in CARPE. In order to be most effective, the programs and activities of other donors must be recognized and taken into account in all other programs. Coordination efforts manage efforts accordingly. Donor coordination can lead to synergies and reduce redundancies and inefficient

overlaps. Collaboration on certain activities can have a multiplier effect. In some cases “division of labor” among donors working on similar issues can be more efficient.

In close cooperation with the region’s governments, these donors and organizations are also supporting and/or implementing a number of programs and initiatives, including the:

- African Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (AFLEGT). This process aims to galvanize international commitment in Africa at a high political level in order to strengthen capacity for forest law enforcement, particularly with regard to illegal logging and hunting, associated trade and corruption with a specific focus on the Congo Basin.
- Central African World Heritage Forest Initiative (CAWHFI), a project focusing on law enforcement and illegal bushmeat trade while using World Heritage image and effective management criteria to improve protected area management and long-term conservation financing.
- Conservation and Rational Use of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa Program (COFAC). This program is active in six countries (Congo, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, São Tomé and Príncipe) and involves research, transfer of knowledge, institutional support, and protection of exceptional sites. It has created the “Réseau des Aires Protégées d’Afrique Centrale” (RAPAC), an association aiming to support a network of protected areas in Central Africa.
- Regional Environmental Information Management Program (REIMP). This program was created by the governments of Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon with support of a group of multilateral and bilateral donors to help share environmental knowledge and information. Their sub-regional co-operation agreement includes the creation of an implementing body, the “Association for the Development of Environmental Information - ADIE”.
- FORAF: A regional “virtual” forest observatory under the general umbrella of COMIFAC and the CBFP which combines the efforts of CBFP partners to pool information on the forests, biodiversity and activities in Central Africa. The FORAF group produces the biannual State of the Forest Report, the authoritative reference on the Congo Basin forest.

Regional African Collaboration

The overarching collaboration process commenced with the Yaoundé Declaration in 1999. This collaboration process resulted in the present Commission on the Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC). COMIFAC has sponsored a subsequent Heads of State Summit, the Brazzaville Summit in 2005 and has held regular meetings of the Conference of Ministers in charge of Forests in Central Africa. The first of these (COMIFAC I) was

held in Yaoundé in December 2000 and the second (COMIFAC II) in the same location in June 2002. At COMIFAC I, the Ministers adopted the WWF- facilitated Biodiversity Vision for the Guineo-Congolian forests as the blueprint for conservation in the region; by this same act they committed themselves to the conservation of 10% of the forest habitat in protected areas. These commitments are expressed in the Conservation Convergence Plan which was updated and endorsed at the 2006 Brazzaville summit and entitled the *Plan de Convergence*. This action plan calls for developing protected area networks in 12 (11 of which are associated as the CBFP focal landscapes) priority landscapes spanning the Congo Basin and calls for 15% of national territories to be included as protected areas. For one of these landscapes, the Sangha Tri-national, a landscape management agreement between Cameroon, the Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic was signed at COMIFAC I in December 2000 and a Trinational Trust Fund was subsequently created and approved in 2007 with a financial endowment to provide support for its management.

Another important regional forest initiative, the Conference on Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems - CEFDHAC, which engaged the forest ministers of the region, was initiated in Brazzaville in 1996. At COMIFAC II, CEFDHAC was fully subsumed under the COMIFAC process and has become an organ of COMIFAC, thus strengthening and harmonizing the two initiatives.

The Congo Basin Forest Partnership (see below) is an initiative that brings together governments, NGOs, and the private sector in pursuit of goals and objectives that overlap in significant measure with those of CARPE. Maintaining transparency and communication between, and coordinating activities of, CARPE and the CBFP is the challenge for both of these partnerships, but it is a high priority for both in order to achieve maximum synergy and efficiency. Because both are such diverse partnerships, adequate effort spent on their coordination goes a long way toward maintaining good donor coordination within the entire community of donors interested in the sustainable development and conservation of forests and biological diversity in Central Africa.

The Congo Basin Forest Partnership

The United States and South Africa, along with 27 public and private partners, launched the Congo Basin Forest Partnership at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg on September 4, 2002. The stated goal in this partnership is to promote economic development, poverty alleviation, improved governance, and natural resources conservation through support for a network of national parks and protected areas, well-managed forestry concessions, and assistance to communities who depend upon the conservation of the outstanding forest and wildlife resources of eleven key landscapes in six Central African countries. Priorities of the CBFP are to:

- Provide people sustainable means of livelihood through well-managed forestry concessions, sustainable agriculture, and integrated ecotourism programs;
- Help countries develop a network of effectively managed national parks, protected areas, and corridors; and,

- Improve forest and natural resource governance through community-based management, combating illegal logging, and enforcing anti-poaching laws.

The eleven landscapes include (protected areas within the landscape are indicated in italics):

- Monte Alen - Mont de Cristal Inselbergs Forest Landscape: *Mt. Seni and Mbé* (Gabon and Equatorial Guinea)
- Gamba - Conkouati Forest Landscape: *Loango / Moukalaba-Doudou / Mayumba / Conkouati* (Gabon, Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo)
- Lope - Chaillu - Louesse Forest Landscape: *Lope / Waka / Dimonika* (Gabon and Congo)
- Dja - Minkebe - Odzala Tri-national Forest Landscape: *Boumba Bek - Nki / Minkebe / Mwangé / Ivindo / Odzala* (Cameroon, Congo and Gabon)
- Sangha Tri-national Forest Landscape: *Dzanga Sangha / Nouabale Ndoki / Lobeke* (Cameroon, Congo and Central African Republic)
- Lac Tele - Lac Tumba Swamp Forest Landscape: *Lac Tele / Lac Tumba* (Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo)
- Bateke Plateau Forest Savanna Landscape: *Mpassa / Haute Ogoue* (Gabon and Congo)
- Maringa / Lopori - Wamba Forest Landscape: *Maringa-Lopori / Wanga* (Democratic Republic of Congo)
- Salonga - Lukenie - Sankuru Forest Landscape: *Salonga* (Democratic Republic of Congo)
- Maiko - Lutunguru Tayna - Kahuzi Biega Forest Landscape: *Maiko / Kahuzi - Biega* (Democratic Republic of Congo)
- Ituru - Epulu - Aru Forest Landscape: *Okapi* (Democratic Republic of Congo).

The U.S. managed the “facilitation” of the CBFP for the first two years (2003-2005) followed by the French government, while the German government assumed the facilitation responsibilities in 2007. Some international conservation organizations in the CBFP have indicated a desire to significantly increase the resources that they are already devoting to forest conservation and wildlife protection in the Congo Basin. Donors and regional governments reached approximately \$120 million by 2007 (*Evaluation Conjoint Franco Allmande du Partenariat pour les Basin du Congo et de ses Facilitation pour le Period 2005-2007*) with large additional funds in the pipeline as interest has expanded. Additional resources will come from bilateral donor governments, the European Commission and the private sector. Partners in the CBFP include the governments of countries in the basin -- Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo; individual donor governments; NGOs including Conservation International, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Wildlife Fund, World Resources Institute, Jane Goodall Institute, Forest Trends, and the Society of American Foresters; U.S. and international business organizations, including the American Forest and Paper Association and the *Association Technique International de Bois Tropicaux-ATIBT*; and international organizations such as the Center for

International Forestry Research (CIFOR), IUCN – the World Conservation Union, the Smithsonian Institution, the World Bank.

The Congo Forest Basin Partnership has been launched at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002. As a type II partnership (non-binding) it is based on a voluntary agreement between governments, the private sector, civil society and development organizations. Today, the partnership comprises about 40 members working together toward common objectives:

- implementing the roadmap approved at the WSSD for promoting the development, sustainable management and conservation of the forest ecosystems of the Central Africa region
- supporting the implementation of the *Yaoundé Déclaration*, set up by Central Africa's Head of States in March 1999. The Yaoundé Declaration confirms their governments' firm commitment to engage in politics and actions favoring the conservation and sustainable management of the region's forest ecosystems.

The defining characteristic of the CBFP is the nature of the “Type II Partnership” that defines and in many ways is responsible for the successes that the CBFP has enjoyed. Partnerships in the context of the WSSD process correspond with the following criteria and guidelines below:

- Partnerships are voluntary initiatives undertaken by governments and relevant stakeholders, e.g. major groups and institutional stakeholders;
- Partnerships should contribute to the implementation of Agenda 21, the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and should not divert from commitments contained in those agreements;
- Partnerships are not intended to substitute commitments made by Governments but to supplement the implementation of Agenda 21, the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;
- Partnerships should have concrete value addition to the implementation process and should be new - that is not merely reflect existing arrangements;
- Partnerships should bear in mind the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their design and implementation;
- Partnerships should be based on predictable and sustained resources for their implementation, include mobilizing new resources and, where relevant, result in transfer of technology to, and capacity building in, developing countries;
- It is desirable that partnerships have a sectoral and geographical balance;
- Partnerships should be designed and implemented in a transparent and accountable manner. In this regard, they should exchange relevant information with Governments and other relevant stakeholders;
- Partnerships should be publicly announced with the intention of sharing the specific contribution that they make to the implementation of Agenda 21, the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;

- Partnerships should be consistent with national laws, national strategies for the implementation of Agenda 21, the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, as well as the priorities of countries where their implementation takes place;
- The leading partner of a partnership initiative should inform the national focal point for sustainable development of the involved country/countries about the initiation and progress of the partnership, and all partners should bear in mind the guidance provided by Governments; and
- The involvement of international institutions and United Nations funds, programs and agencies in partnerships should conform to the inter-governmentally agreed mandates and should not lead to the diversion to partnerships of resources otherwise allocated for their mandated programs.

Conclusion

The Congo Basin Forest Partnership, though only in operation for six years, may at least be considered a qualified success in terms of the objectives it set forth at the outset, for following the criteria stipulated for “Type II Partnership” and as a partnership process itself. While many questions remain regarding the sustainability of the efforts, interest is growing as demonstrated in the growing number of partners and the additional financing being obtained from both private and public sources. While some of the elements for success may not be quantifiable, the following points appear to be common to successful efforts of this nature.

1. The eventual partnership was based on several years of initial exploration, and solid lessons learned that were incorporated into the partnership.
2. The partnership responded to regional actors’ defined priorities as developed through a rather lengthy process of local and international stakeholders’ consultations and discussions.
3. The subject of conserving the tropical forest became timely not only because of international recognition of the value of biodiversity, but of a convergence of opinion on the threat of global climate change and the recognized role that tropical forests in climate change mitigation.
4. The Type II nature of the partnership allowed various actors to freely contribute without unduly restricting individual partner programs. This flexibility was initially a key point and as the partnership matures, additional collaboration tools are being developed.
5. The USG committed to a long-term financial commitment which provided the core platform and structure for the partnership to develop.
6. Most of the interaction of stakeholders took place in the context of a regional process, the COMIFAC, which helped orient partners toward locally perceived needs.

Working together to solve resource management problems has had a tangible impact on political relationships amongst neighboring regional states. For example, former belligerents Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC negotiated and signed an accord on co-

managing the ecologically and politically sensitive cross-national Virunga landscape. Collaboration in the form of joint patrols, gorilla tourism revenue sharing and harmonized environmental monitoring serve as confidence building measures thereby, contributing to the conditions for normalization of international relations. European partners, especially France, Germany and the European Union have been forthcoming and contribute diplomatic efforts as well as financing for a large part of the program. Donor support for the CBFP has been remarkable with increasing amounts of leveraged funds flowing to the partnership. While there is not a full assessment of the total level of leveraged CBFP funds, the amount of complementary activities under development or already approved since the announcement of the CBFP is constantly growing. This year, the British government announced a Congo Basin Fund of \$100 million and the Norwegian government has proposed \$3.0 billion over five years for tropical forest conservation with a substantial portion destined for the Congo Basin. Increased participation of the private sector, particularly private logging companies, is rapidly evolving while collaboration with the regional ministerial Commission on Forests for Central Africa (COMIFAC) is an increasingly effective avenue for multilateral dialogue which complements direct bilateral policy discussions with the regional member states.

The momentum achieved by the CBFP is impressive by any measure. Regional collaboration has intensified, improved policies are being put in place and civil society is playing a larger role in dialogue with governments. Increasingly, the private sector, particularly the predominately European timber and mining companies, sees that it is in its interest to improve environmental stewardship. A looming issue is the expanding interest by Asian countries in exploiting forest and mineral resources. Regional states' environmental regulatory capacity remains chronically weak to manage these potentially large natural resource investments, and Asian countries have not yet developed the international environmental norms required by most western companies, raising questions on how environmental impacts will be mitigated from new investments from these regions.

The next few years will prove to be a critical time for what is today the second largest intact tropical humid forest in the world. US leadership has played a pivotal role in garnering international support for the conservation of these invaluable resources. A good deal is at stake for the people of the region and for the entire globe. Technical and financial support combined with classic diplomatic engagement will serve to deepen and sustain the conditions for the economic and environmental future of this region and ultimately our entire planet.

Annex

Maps of Forest cover and forest cover change in the Congo Basin from circa 1990 – circa 2000 are available on the CARPE website at <http://carpe.umd.edu/resources/dfcm>.