

Trip Report: Congo Basin Donor Meeting J.F. Swartzendruber - Brussels, 23-24 April 1997

Summary

A large number of donor agency representatives attended a two-day meeting in Brussels to discuss issues related to donor complementarity within existing and planned forest-sector and conservation activities in the Congo Basin. Initially intended as a relatively small and informal gathering, in the end 57 individuals participated, representing some two-dozen institutions based in 16 countries. Specific arrangements for coordination are yet to be decided, but the meeting clearly established the need for better information-sharing and *concertation* of activities, as the central Africa region comes into the spotlight and attracts environmental investments from a growing number of organizations.

USAID presented the CARPE project to the meeting, one of a small number of regional projects which were presented at the opening of the meeting. The presentation succeeded in conveying important aspects of CARPE - regionally-networked activities, a rolling design, absence of direct USAID presence - to a well-placed audience which had not in many cases been aware of the range of activities supported by CARPE. USAID was represented by Phillip Jones, CARPE Project Officer in the Africa Bureau, and myself; Linda Nield, based at the U.S. Mission to the EU, was present as an observer.

Presentations

Amos Tincani, co-chair of the meeting, opened the session on behalf of the European Commission (DG VIII), noting the growing need for complementarity among donor activities. David Brown and Gill Shepherd of the Overseas Development Institute (a British agency similar to WRI) served as meeting facilitators. Brown reviewed a background paper which had been prepared by ODI for the donor meeting, noting several main points:

- information is seen as a constraint in decision-making;
- Cameroon presents a useful case-study for the region;
- distinctions exist between multilateral and bilateral donors;
- risk exists for duplication of efforts;
- there is low absorptive capacity of state agencies and civil society at present; and
- there is great need to expand stakeholder participation.

Across the region, state retrenchment has brought about a process of *de facto* decentralization and proliferation of NGOs, but information-sharing between stakeholders and donors continues to present problems. Mechanisms for donor coordination need to be explored - part of the purpose of this meeting - as well as issues such as linkages between activities at the national and regional levels.

Multilateral Assistance and Regional Programs

Several presentations focused on regionally-based donor projects; with the exception of USAID, these were multilateral donors. Enrico Pironio (EC DGVIII) presented information on the APFT and ECOFAC projects,

and Ndinga Assitou (IUCN) gave a presentation on the "Brazzaville Process" (*Conférence sur les Ecosystèmes des Forêts Denses Humides d'Afrique Centrale - CEFDHAC*). ECOFAC has recently launched its second phase, and the Dutch government has recently agreed to fund continuation of the Brazzaville process. APFT and ECOFAC are funded from the same unit of the EC, and also have a formal cooperation protocol (in addition CARPE is linked to both projects through the presence of APFT's Theodore Trefon and ECOFAC research scientist Annie Gautier-Hion on the CARPE Advisory Panel). I showed a PowerPoint presentation on CARPE, ending with a series of points moving from the project to the regional level, and suggesting a number of practical steps for follow-up by the donor contact group. (The presentation is available electronically and in hard copy; contact Jim Graham or David Wilkie for information.)

Cynthia Cook presented the World Bank's portfolio in the region, emphasizing the REIMP/PRGIE project, now in the final approval phases, as well as discussion of other opportunities which had previously been known as the "Congo Basin Initiative." Cook also stressed the concept of complementarity, and urged donors to think specifically in terms of comparative advantage, and also mentioned a new initiative being launched by Bank President Wolfensohn, the "Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund." She noted that the Bank's present portfolio in the region is constrained to some extent by the forest policy approach laid down in the Bank's 1991 forest sector policy document, and described the Bank's adjustment lending programs in Cameroon and Congo, including efforts aimed at reform of the forest code in Cameroon. The Bank hopes to be able to work in Zaire before long, after an absence of several years.

Overall, the Bank's portfolio totals \$2.8 billion for the Congo Basin, an extremely large sum even with the absence of Zaire, of which approximately \$150 million per year supports the forest and environment sectors. Transport is the largest sector, representing 35% of the World Bank budget for the region. Cook also presented a "SWOT" matrix (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of the Bank's portfolio within the region. Areas of strength for the Bank include technical knowledge and resources, policy dialogue, capacity-building through investment projects, and the GEF projects; weaknesses include the fact that the portfolio at present is not client-driven, weak project management on the ground, the absence of donor coordination, and lack of sectoral analysis. Threats include the region's high level of political instability, and low governmental commitment to sustainable forest management. Opportunities include the new "Congo Basin Assistance Strategy" (successor to the CBI), but for these opportunities to reach their potential several ingredients are needed:

- better collaboration with NGOs, private sector, and local communities;
- less coercive policy dialogue;
- definitions of sustainable forest management;
- better methods of research and results-monitoring;
- improved governance.

The Bank's Economic Development Institute (H. Azumi) presented an EC-funded initiative to train central African policy-makers in topics relating to sustainable forest use, through activities such as study tours to Malaysia and the Amazon. EDI hopes to expand the audience for this awareness-raising activity beyond government leaders to include civil society, including the media and NGOs, and is considering the use of technologies such as CD-ROM as cost-effective methods of reaching such audiences. In comparison with the Bank *per se*, EDI has no lending agenda and thus can offer a less-threatening context for open discussion of options and issues in sectors such as forestry.

John Hough (UNDP/GEF) reviewed the region's progress toward completion of NEAPs (underway or complete in all 6 countries) as well as early steps toward formulation of National Biodiversity Strategies. UNDP

supports development of a regional process, and sees the Brazzaville mechanism as a positive development. UNDP has also contributed, through the Sustainable Development Network, to development of Internet connectivity for the region, and has supported technical assistance to the ATO for private-sector management-capacity-improvement. The UNDP-GEF program is engaged in protected areas projects, and recently the idea of a "Congo/Zaire River System" project has been raised.

The FAO (de Montalembert) reviewed the history of FAO support to the forest sector, notably the role of TFAPs but also technical support for commercial forestry inventories, and the decennial forest resources assessment, which has become a key reference for work in this sector. Forest cover data from 1995 have just been published (March 1997) by FAO, and through the Africover program, FAO expects to collaborate with the World Bank REIMP/PRGIE project. FAO presently has a study underway examining causes of deforestation, and also recently published a large volume detailing the national forest policies for all countries in Africa including the Congo Basin countries (available from FAO Rome and other offices). The FAO's Forests, Trees and People program supports a variety of community forestry activities, and recently sponsored an African workshop. An update on TFAPs is published every six months also. De Montalembert voiced concern that the sectoral (forestry) approaches often seen in donor activities need to take more account of the effects of factors such as structural adjustment.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, David Kingsbury) works with four of the countries of the Congo Basin: Zaire is excluded for now, and Cameroon is in serious arrears, making it ineligible for assistance at present. IFAD participated in the World Bank's appraisal mission for the REIMP project, and is looking for other opportunities for collaboration in the region. IFAD has a small grant program (up to \$70,000) but is concerned by the weakness of the NGO sector in this region. IFAD is particularly interested in the relationship between agriculture and natural resources management, not forestry *per se*, and wants to develop linkages with other organizations working on similar topics. Typically IFAD focuses on field-level activities rather than macro-policy initiatives, but is quite new to the central Africa region and is still exploring opportunities.

Bilateral Assistance Programs

Bilateral donors reviewed their investments within the region and noted particular areas of interest or concern. Olivier Hamel (Coopération Française) reviewed the French portfolio, around 180 million Francs per year; this includes activities such as the French GEF, ORSTOM, and the Caisse de Développement Française, in four countries: Cameroon, CAR, Congo, and Gabon. France maintains a substantial technical assistance presence within the national *Eaux et Forêts*, as well support to regional bodies such as ATO. Hamel noted that it is not widely realized that the ATO has within its mandate a role of working on forest ecosystems, and urged other donors to support ATO in its broader context, while acknowledging that at present the group is seen as a trade-promotion body tightly linked to French timber interests. Together with CIFOR, France supports the FORAFRI project, based in Libreville, which will disseminate sylvicultural research findings to stakeholders interested in sustainable use; also, France is presently completing a study on the role of Malaysian and European logging companies in the Congo Basin, as part of an effort to develop a better understanding of the region's timber sector.

Germany presented a two-part review of its investments, beginning with the overall bilateral policy perspective as seen from BMZ (K. Melhart). Christian Mersmann (GTZ) then summarized key areas of interest from the German point of view, which included:

- capacity-building priorities, including NGOs as well as public-sector forestry agencies;
- the principles of participation, decentralised decision-making, and the role of the private sector (the latter including both the traditional/informal sector as well as commercial forestry companies);

- openness to new areas such as ecotourism; and
- the need to find practical measures for improving resource management.

Germany's bilateral investment in the region comes to around 70 million DM per year, and includes a range of economic development efforts within buffer zones as well as conservation projects. Mersmann cited the recent trend of Asian logging companies' arriving in the region as an example of the urgent need for practical measures and better information. He also noted the risk of contradictions between national-level initiatives (such as TFAPs already in place, as well as NEAPs now being completed) and regional-level planning and coordination concepts now being proposed. GTZ supports donor coordination to ensure that such contradictions are minimized, but noted that substantive issues will not be easy to resolve. Germany supports the FSC principles for promoting more sustainable forest use with broad stakeholder participation, and noted the fact that, for example, certain IMF policies tend to undermine efforts toward decentralised decision-making. Germany also supports the Brazzaville process, but noted that the mandate of ATO continued to present some issues. Mersmann emphasized the importance of consultation between national-level institutions and regional initiatives, and recommended a policy of flexible, *ad hoc* structures such as the present meeting, avoiding the creation of permanent bodies analogous to CILSS, which would not be sustainable financially. One task for such informal consultation could be the harmonisation of "frame approaches" by donors.

Mersmann also noted that while certain issues are best addressed through national-level mechanisms such as NEAPs and TFAPs, there are clearly regional problems which will need to be addressed regionally, for example, the export of logs from northern Congo via Cameroon and the relabelling of logs to conceal their true origin; such practices undermine rational policies and trade management. The EC/WWF-Belgium study on the timber industry promises to be a useful contribution toward better understanding of these dynamics and identification of possible remedies. Also, the Trinational approach to conservation (Congo, Cameroon, CAR) along the shared border has been very constructive. Finally, GTZ hopes that the region can begin to develop joint positions on global convention issues (IPF, climate change, etc.). To date the region has been largely absent with respect to discussion of issues which often have significant implications, such as the appropriate role of "incremental costs" within the GEF program.

The British Overseas Development Agency (ODA, J. Hudson) reviewed its portfolio in the region, which is limited to Cameroon, primarily in the anglophone part of the country. ODA projects come to around \$3-4 million per year, and cover topics including protected areas (Korup, Mt. Cameroon), community forestry, and forest sector policy. In Cameroon ODA does not work at the same level as in its focus countries such as Ghana; instead, ODA tries to work in collaboration with other organizations. For this reason, ODA is interested in developing closer linkages with other donors, and supports the idea of regional initiatives. ODA has also supported the work of NGOs such as WWF and Birdlife International in Cameroon.

The Netherlands (J. van Rijsoort) provides support to a number of conservation and forestry-related activities including Tropenbos in Cameroon, the IUCN small grants program (Cameroon), CIFOR work on criteria and indicators for timber certification (Cameroon), watershed management projects (Cameroon), the Forest Stewardship Council (Cameroon and Gabon), the establishment of ICDPs (WWF/Gabon), and conservation in the Virungas (regionally-based). The Netherlands is now considering support in Congo including Lac Télé, and sustainable forest management; the latter could perhaps include a project carried out in conjunction with a private-sector logging concession.

Belgium (G. Schorochoff) has historically been most involved in Zaire, but is now reorganizing its assistance program, while aid to Zaire has recently been largely focused on humanitarian efforts. It is not yet clear how the reorganization will affect the portfolio insofar as countries and sectors are concerned. At present there are no purely forest projects, although Belgian assistance has been provided to the design phase of the World Bank REIMP/PRGIE project. Also, the Federal Office of Scientific, Technical and Cultural Affairs has collaborated with REIMP and others (incl. CARPE) on providing access to remote sensing images and support to creation of

a meta-database for the Congo Basin at the University of Ghent.

Timber Sector Review

The next session of the meeting was chaired by Hans Carle, the head of unit for the EC's Central Africa Region (Directorate of Development).

John Hudson (ODA) presented some observations on the nature of the timber trade in Central and West Africa, suggesting that we are now seeing in the Congo Basin region very similar trends encountered roughly 15 years ago in Asia and the Pacific, or more recently (3-4 years ago) in coastal West Africa. This includes structural changes in markets, a sharp rise in demand for logs, an increase in the number of species in demand, the presence of speculative harvestors - often very small operators - and brokers who operate on the margins or "spot market." There is a great deal of misinformed opinion about logging in Africa; for example, in most cases countries with better infrastructure will respond much more quickly to market demand changes, whereas other countries present serious obstacles. The image of logging companies "rushing in" is often unrealistic; with respect to Asian companies, for example, in many cases these are basically buying-out earlier European firms. There has not - contrary to common belief - been a large-scale Asian investment in central Africa thus far. Instead, these companies often operate through other firms, in essence buying through brokers or middlemen. Despite the many scare stories, there has been very little serious study of the technical methods used by Asian firms. Furthermore, much of the criticism ignores that previous generations of European logging firms were doing little to improve technical standards or to produce meaningful forest management.

On the other hand, different African societies respond to the environmental aspects of logging in quite different ways. For example, in Ghana the media have published photos of logs being exported, raising public awareness of the danger to the country's natural environment and bringing political pressure to control timber operations. As civil society is on the whole much stronger in Ghana than in Congo Basin countries, it is much more likely that effective measures can be taken to curb excesses. Yet it should be kept in mind that it is probably a vain hope to try to improve governance, which is a macro-level problem, through donor-funded projects focused in a single sector such as forestry. Instead one needs much more broadly-based efforts to strengthen civil society generally. In addition, it would be helpful to remove some of the emotion from the logging issue, as eventually it will be necessary to work in some fashion with the private sector and with governments; demonizing them is not going to improve communication.

WWF-Belgium (Lean-Luc Roux) presented an overview of the Congo Basin timber sector, drawing upon data collected in the course of a project funded by the EC (DG VIII) and in which WRI is a collaborator. According to Roux, logging is pursued in most of the Congo Basin as a form of "mining;" with the exception of Ghana, in most of Africa "forests are seen as a source of revenue to be exploited rather than as ecosystems to manage." In most cases also local people are excluded from decision-making, with the national leadership (usually the president) awarding concessions in exactly the same way as for mining. (This also has clear implications for issues of transparency and governance.)

Market structure is in the midst of a major shift: Asian markets now account for imports on the level of 100 million m³ of tropical wood per year, while Europe accounts for just 10 million m³ of tropical wood. In Europe and North America, a much higher share of demand is met from non-tropical timber sources. In Africa, lack of participation from local communities often leads to conflict with concession operators, and it is now realized by most observers that without local participation there can be no sustainable management. Key elements necessary for fundamental change in this situation include:

- clear commitment and support to sustainable forest management from the highest national authorities;
- coordination of action by key players in the forest sector; and

- clear international commitment to upgrading forestry practices.

Roux observed that in the central Africa region, one can describe key players by analogy to sports leagues: in "Division 1" are the World Bank, French Cooperation, and the EU; "Division 2" includes the timber companies, the ATO, and the other donors. The French Development Bank wields the greatest financial influence in the sector. Priorities for donor action should include institution-strengthening, support for national-level planning, community forestry, technical improvement within the industry, and local NGO strengthening. It is unrealistic to expect private logging firms to bear the full burden of controlling hunting, shifting cultivation, etc. thus local NGOs have a great role to play which they are presently unable to do. Certification should be seen as a market tool; as such, it requires (i) demand for certified timber - which at present is limited except in northern Europe, (ii) its costs must be perceived as less than its benefits, and (iii) systems and structures for implementation. It won't necessarily be possible to transfer approaches developed in the North to regions such as central Africa.

Many African timbers presently are shipped to southern Europe which has much lower levels of interest in certification, and a growing proportion is now also going to Asia. In addition, there is a substantial level of processing and transformation within southern Europe, for resale in northern Europe. Based on experience to date, which represents roughly 3 million hectares of forest land, the costs of certification are quite low, on the order of US\$0.50 - 1.00 per ha. But much higher costs are borne for inventories, data gathering, and other necessary procedures. Stakeholder involvement can play a catalytic role, for example in setting standards, monitoring, etc. and set examples of good practices, raising awareness of good forest management. Constructive relationships between NGOs and timber companies are possible. Contrary to many impressions, many of the Asian companies in the region seem simply to be replacing and repeating the approach of earlier European firms.

It is important to avoid the situation of façades or isolated pilot cases, which don't influence methods used in most of the industry or even in non-certified tracts exploited by the same company. ATO has potential to play a role in regional coordination, though there still remains the need for African certification agencies. The Leroy Gabon case is a good case study, which has triggered the interest of many others including companies as well as NGOs. This includes a simple management plan, a plan to control hunting, training of local staff, liaison with a scientific research institute (in France); the cost for these components was relatively modest. The entire effort began as a kind of "greenwash" but now appears to be developing into a serious test case. By the end of this year (1997) WWF-Belgium and WRI will complete the study and release a report.

Discussion of Material Presented

Carle noted the interesting contrast between the cases of Ghana and the Congo Basin, but also the major difference between their levels of commitment to transparency and governance. Rietbergen (IUCN) commented that many observers blame structural adjustment for environmental problems, yet adjustment shows only a weak relationship to government behavior in the forestry sector: if the governments are driven by the need to increase revenue under IMF pressure, then how is it that most of these governments typically collect barely half the royalties they are due from concessions? A more important direct factor has probably been the CFA devaluation together with liberalized commodity pricing regimes which have led to a big jump in production of commodities. This places heavy pressure on coastal forest zones, and this economic factor is probably a more significant one than the arrival of Asians. Local people are planting cocoa and coffee in response to market conditions which cover very large areas, while it is not clear how deep into the interior of central Africa's forest most Asian companies are willing to go.

The human dynamic is key; governments resist change, and have very weak capacity to implement it in any case. Interestingly, the CAR has fewer pretensions about their ability to "manage" forests than Cameroon, for example, which has marginally more technical capacity but falls far short of what is needed to be able to effectively manage forests. Yet in the region there are certain groups which are being missed, while donors overly-focus on "environmental" NGOs. Groups such as INADES-Formation in Cameroon have extensive

experience in training and have even run NRM programs but are seldom contacted by donors active in this sector, who naturally tend to look toward forestry or conservation groups.

Gautier-Hion (ECOFAC) questioned whether the scientific base exists at present to even speak meaningfully of forest management in this region. There is no baseline, yet one speaks of drawing up management plans without data on tree regeneration, etc. Hough (UNDP) observed that the objectives of national governments would not always be the same as those of institutions involved in certification. De Montalembert (FAO) added that as the Asian companies increase their investment, and as donor assistance funds decline, it will be increasingly important to have better information, and also to clarify the role of key actors, including national governments.

F. Grison (CIRAD-Foret) responded to the question of management of tropical forests, stating that at least partial data are available for a number of relevant sites; in this respect the FORAFRI project has a role to play in helping disseminate this information to practitioners in forms useful to them. The former API project at Dimako (Cameroon) is to be succeeded by a new NRM project (*Projet Forêts et Terroirs*), covering an area of around 1 million ha. Such projects need to respect the right of traditional use, and search for an equilibrium between the respective needs of forest users, governments, and other stakeholders. Grison is presently chairing the European Network for Tropical Forests, which has an office at Wageningen in the Netherlands.

Mersmann responded to Hough's comment, suggesting it would be best to try "to make ends meet" by focusing on donor coordination and seeking practical measures which don't involve much bureaucracy. There are a number of initiatives already underway, such as the Innovative Financing Mechanisms which met recently in Pretoria, also the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests which met last year. But the question left behind by many such efforts is: what practical conclusions have been produced? In our case (Congo Basin) we need to keep this experience in mind.

Claude Heimo (World Bank) stressed the urgency of action, noting for example that gorillas are killed in Cameroon for the equivalent of \$35. At present information takes far too long to circulate between donors; perhaps it is time to introduce "virtual coordination" using email?

Carle (EU) noted the case of the transport sector project in Cameroon, which happens to have been on the agenda today for the finance committee of the EC; it has taken seven years for donors to reach a policy on the transport sector. We now understand that the road system represents a *patrimoine nationale*. Perhaps this case suggests the need for national-level coordination, with a lead agency for each country, or focused by sector... Mersmann responded that for this to work it would require that a lead agency be able to effectively lead, yet to date despite 10-12 years of talk about this there has been very little evidence that donors are willing to operate in this way.

Azumi (EDI) articulated three principles to guide development of donor coordination mechanisms: (i) avoid duplication, (ii) begin with limited coordination, and (iii) begin to seek joint activities. By building on existing projects or activities, such as the Brazzaville Process, progress can be made, though in this instance the participant base is too narrow and needs to be expanded. Hough raised the question on non-timber forest products (NTFPs), noting that perspectives within the Basin differ a great deal from those of the external community, for example on issues such as the value of wildlife and other resource use. Planning needs therefore to be seen as a continuum; at present there are NEAPs, TFAP, and National Biodiversity Strategies but these are not linked to each other. Also, these are usually developed from a national perspective yet the true significance of the Basin is at the regional and global levels; thus there is need to link national and regional-level activities such as the Brazzaville Process. Third, one needs to face the issue of government commitment to such processes in times of political and economic stress. Donors should shift focus of capacity-building efforts toward civil society and informal structures. Fourth, we need to remain realistic about what can be achieved, at what time scale. In the Congo Basin, biodiversity is being lost at an accelerating rate, yet many of our interventions seem to be aiming at targets which do not take this into account. For example, some projects seem to assume that forest management can be made sustainable on a large-scale basis, yet fail to take into account that in some of

these countries, there may be no more than 10% of non-fragmented forest left to manage within the next 20 years. In other words, they are planning to manage what exists today, rather than anticipating what will actually remain tomorrow. More realistic management objectives are necessary, which may mean focusing on smaller geographic areas.

P. Jones (USAID) observed that it may require higher-level political and diplomatic efforts to tackle some of these issues, such as commodity markets and timber imports - there is limited scope to address these within the framework of most projects. Kingsbury (IFAD) responded that the case of structural adjustment offers some lessons. Often adjustment is blamed for environmental problems, yet the countries of central Africa have done little adjustment, they have the worst adjustment records in Africa; by contrast, Ghana has both a good adjustment record and a good system of forest management. From IFAD's point of view, the question is: what is the interface between good forest management and good agricultural development? IFAD is planning an agriculture project in northern Congo, but is concerned to better understand potential impact on forests.

Heimo commented that insofar as the question of the relationship between NTFP and biodiversity is concerned, the immediate problem is that we don't know how to value the biodiversity. Investors need information, without it one cannot plan effectively. Gautier-Hion (Rennes) added that we don't even know the biodiversity! For example, riverine/gallery forests appear to be areas of concentrated biodiversity, *viviers d'espèces*. This is ignored by conservation groups, which only seek dense, intact primary forest blocs. Yet these riverine forests are generally less accessible, somewhat protected, often inundated, and face less immediate threat of exploitation. They could end by becoming "refugia." This implies that corridors of conservation along these river systems could easily and inexpensively represent one approach to conservation avoiding the fragmentation of typical protected area systems.

Heimo stated that there is a collection of some 800,000 georeferenced samples from Zaire, which could be made available to pharmaceutical companies. But it would also be necessary to have agreements with local inhabitants on the use of samples, and on what happens after donors leave. D. Joiris (APFT) made the point that most of these projects have very minimal contact with local populations. Projects normally begin without even basic demographic data, and make little provision for resource zoning adequate to the needs of local inhabitants. This induces serious problems between conservation projects and local people. Hudson noted that this experience was true in Cameroon, in which projects such as Korup and Mt. Cameroon have significantly changed their approach as the result of similar experiences. In these sites ODA is now working in collaboration with GTZ and GEF, which adds enormously to the resources available to assess and address issues, though naturally it requires coordination. In general it is true that there is little sharing of experience from place to place except through informal, personal channels based on individual contacts. There has been an explosion of activity in Cameroon, and the ambiguous position of the government has been a widespread experience. Most efforts still lack long-term funding arrangements, or stable institutional arrangements. Much of the work remains somewhat isolated, and nearly always remains in the context of a single country. Yet on a regional scale, it is even more important to overcome these isolating factors.

S. Rietbergen (IUCN) called for more coordination in approaches to local populations. Weak governments in the region mean that much of the resource management burden falls on projects and on the operators of forest concessions, therefore incoherent approaches by anyone can undermine the work of all. IFAD did a study of incentives used on-the-ground and how this relates to sustainability. This is important information; we have to be honest that we still don't really understand effective resource management incentive systems, and that most ICDPs to date have not worked very well.

Gautier emphasized the critical problem of hunting pressures; a study by ECOFAC collected detailed information from sites in three countries, with alarming findings. It is imperative to find ways of controlling over-hunting, present trends are simply unsustainable, and there is clear empirical evidence of this. Carle responded by asking whether it was realistic for donors to intervene in this area; for example, can donors be expected to take up a paramilitary role vis-a-vis armed Sudanese poachers?

P. Mayaux (JRC) described briefly the TREES project and its role in measuring deforestation and modelling the processes of forest loss. These findings will be made available to end-users. Phase II is funded by the EC (DG XI) and will work more closely with ECOFAC, REIMP, Pathfinder, Africover, etc. though these all use somewhat different methodologies. F. Rantrua (World Bank) stated that the goal was to create networks between data users, not to create new data but to add value by making the data available. A. Simon (FAO) responded that the problem is that most of the data are too highly aggregated for immediate use. It is also necessary to focus on the process of loss rather than highly-precise measurements of area lost. One wants to know the pressure points on which to concentrate. Mayaux acknowledged the point, but insisted that it was still critical to have better modelling.

Carle observed that in the early 1960s the French IGN flew many aerial photography missions over Africa, using converted American B-17 bombers. This archive represents a *trésor documentaire* but somehow it seems not be used... Would it not be possible to find such archives and make them available, for example on CD-ROM? Azumi responded that what is needed more than data is knowledge, "meta-information." Who knows what? How do I get it?

C.M. Falkenberg (GTZ) commented that every project and every staffer seems to need their own GIS, they refuse to build on anything done by someone else, but these systems are often incompatible. We as donors need to find ways to address this issue. Simon (FAO) also emphasized the importance of access to old data such as aerial photos, which can be related to newer sources. One study has identified twenty causes of deforestation in four major clusters, and has done five case studies, one of which is in Congo. From this information it seems that logging practices have highly variable impacts on forest degradation, ranging from 10-40%. This strongly reinforces the idea of working to improve and upgrade technical harvest methods. J. Esteve (ONF, France) mentioned work funded by the CDF on reduced-impact logging.

Hudson noted that the IPF recommended that countries carry out their own forest reviews, proposing a specific tool for analysis of land-use change. It is crucial for countries to do this internally and then apply their findings; this gives them ownership in the results, compared to work done by outsiders. In a recent case, Brazil detected, through their own internal monitoring, an unexpected increase in deforestation. They have stronger political incentive to respond given that this was a function of an internal management process.

Swartzendruber (USAID) commented on the difference, mentioned by Mr. Azumi, between data and knowledge. It would be very useful to have more timely access to results even if not in detailed form ready for peer-reviewed publication. Policy and project-planning needs are different and require different levels of precision than academic research, but many of our donor-funded projects seem unable to provide any information on a practical schedule. Rietbergen responded that there need not be a contradiction between good science and work in progress, though sometimes this seems to be the case. Some researchers are willing to put their early results into newsletters, which can be a useful way of disseminating information. Kingsbury urged that donors adopt an "information-marketing" perspective, thinking of research findings as products to be marketed as aggressively as one would a commercial product, rather than thinking of communication or dissemination in the conventional sense. Pironio (ECOFAC) responded that this process requires funding, as does effective synthesis, and in many cases, including his own project, this was not something foreseen in the project budget [see note on final page re-meeting with ECOFAC].

Final Session

The final session opened by reviewing major points from the first day, including the growing power of internal (domestic) and Asian markets, interest in diversifying donors and sources of capital, the stakeholder role in certification, and the links between governance and forestry. Often local inhabitants support logging concessions, despite some claims of conflict, as these are often the only source of infrastructure such as schools or clinics, as well as providing jobs. On the other hand, it may be that the poorest countries with the weakest

governments may be those most willing to reform their forest sector, perhaps they have relatively greater incentives to change and smaller entrenched interests fighting reforms.

Also, attention focused on the issue of regional approaches based on local initiatives already in place, such as the Brazzaville Process. Market information is one category which has a natural regional value, also co-management of trans-boundary resources. The region's poor representation in global fora might suggest some form of shared representation to reduce costs. Questions of how to "jump the boundaries" were posed. Data producers have a responsibility to target different audiences based on their specific needs. Four main categories of action were identified:

- broader stakeholder participation, starting at the national level;
- regional information production and dissemination;
- national-level sectoral and policy reform; and
- national-level capacity-building.

The example of UDEAC was cited as a case of the theoretical potential of formal regional bodies falling short of practical capability. Hamel (CF) expressed doubts about the ultimate effectiveness of certification, but supported the need for *concertation régionale*. This might best be met by a forum of some type, with representatives of private sector, NGOs, donors, etc. Yet donors also need one specific forum at the donor level. Roux (WWF-B) noted that the ATO/OAB is still heavily French-oriented, and needs more technical staff from other member countries, and also to become more representative of regional views. Hamel responded that at the previous week's ATO meeting, there was not one minister present from francophone central Africa. Simon (FAO) commented that most coordination structures are too top-down and heavy. There is also a problem not mentioned so far, of the loss of data in this region due to unrest, when buildings and project files are burned or looted.

Rietbergen suggested that certification should be proposed as a modest beginning toward sustainable use, but more efforts should be made toward enforcement of national forest policies, which are widely ignored. Tincani noted that this is the poorest-performing region in general, so when something seems to be working it is a good idea to try to build on it. This is the case of the Brazzaville Process, so donors should support slow movements toward change. The information-sharing area is probably easier to address than policy. Mersmann mentioned the case of TFAPs, and commented that in many cases what is meant by the term "regional" is a set of national projects. In this case, the region is defined ecologically, rather than representing a political definition. Nevertheless it would be best to begin with support to national-level planning activities. G. Haldin (FINNIDA) described the case of Nepal as one in which many uncoordinated forest-sector activities eventually came together in a master-plan framework which has been very useful.

Azumi voiced the need for better tools for both donor-donor collaboration and tools for better country-donor collaboration. For the long-term perhaps one could aim at something like the Amazon Pact in the Congo Basin, but this will take time. Also it would be important to involve the Asian and European markets. Hudson stated that the World Bank and EU role in support of national policies is critical; also the best framework for donor coordination is the national forestry framework. M. Wachira (EDI) cautioned that the Brazzaville Process should not be overwhelmed too early on, it is still a fledgling entity. Also he seconded the wisdom of establishing contacts with Asian counterparts in the dialogue on timber markets.

Ndinga suggested it would be useful to review the status of IUCN's list of critical conservation sites across the region, which was originally established in the 1980s. Would the same sites be identified today, or perhaps some new ones? Contreras (WCFSD) briefly described the role of the Commission and of the hearing to be held May 5-8 in Yaounde. The key purpose is to better understand the power groups behind forest decisions. Carle noted

that yesterday was the 7th anniversary of the Zaire "transition." For the foreseeable future all one can expect are political uncertainties; environmental threats may be relevant.

Pironio commented that little attention has been paid to rural needs; as Dao Joiris said, there is very little socio-anthropological input being provided to donors, and generally a lack of environmental awareness in the region. (C. Cook responded that there are at least a few socio-anthropologists working on the region!) Pironio also offered to open the twice-yearly ECOFAC technical meetings to become a broader discussion forum on conservation for the region. Roux suggested an approach for coordination at the project level, covering ICDPs, policy, institutional-support and capacity-building. A broad-based forum involving many stakeholders would be another approach. Donors could use this type of input into global treaty issues. But donors will still need some form of coordination among themselves.

Cook noted that the World Bank is starting to review the situation in Zaire at macro-policy levels but so far environmental input has not been brought in. The CBAS process could be helpful, but the Bank is open to other ideas as well. Hamel noted the issue of donor "turf" and sensitivity. Also many donors seem more interested in conservation than in development. Perhaps the terminology is part of the problem: difference between "coordination" and "concertation." A forum is a good idea, perhaps with a rotating presidency but a fixed secretariat. French Cooperation would probably support this idea. Kingsbury recommended avoiding any centralization of this process; avoid "financing the coffee breaks." Modest national meetings can start to bridge the macro and micro levels, with information-sharing on projects and problems.

Gautier-Hion reminded the group of the need to ensure that sound ecology is brought into the discussion of forest management. The bibliographic base is essential, but many projects, especially the anglophone groups, seem unaware of what already exists. A forum could be useful, for example on thematic issues, but there is disagreement about key issues: Is tropical forest manageable? Are local needs fundamentally at odds with conservation? Rietbergen responded that much of the older research was descriptive rather than analytic, though it is true that in general it's useful to have access to older archives.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Tincani summarized what has been covered, and offered a few suggestions. The Brazzaville Process should for now remain open, donors should avoid centralizing it for example through funding offered by the Dutch or UNDP. It needs more discussion before the availability of funding starts to validate one single approach and make it concrete or rigid. The USAID-funded NGO workshop to be held by Transparency International is an excellent initiative, though USAID should ensure that it extends beyond CARPE. The idea of a rotating setting for the forum seems a sound one. Carle added that the Cameroon case study seems to offer a great deal, and as the World Bank has the most extensive policy experience in that country, might the Bank be able to propose to the government of the Cameroon to hold a forum in that country, perhaps linked to the NEAP? Cook suggested that rotating the meetings within the region could be helpful.

Swartzendruber proposed a list of simple next steps for consideration, including a policy of open-door meetings, noting that CARPE has benefited from participation in meetings held by ECOFAC and REIMP, and will take on the challenge of opening more of CARPE's meetings, though one difficulty is that most of our meetings take place in Washington. Swartzendruber also urged the other donors to begin planning for possible environmental activity in Zaire as that situation appears to be in a rapid transition; Cook responded that the Bank is already in process of reviewing its options in Zaire.

Mersmann mentioned the experience of consultative groups which provide support to national forestry programs, following FAO guidelines. But coordination at the project level may be incompatible where significant decentralization is taking place, for example at district or provincial levels rather than in national capitals. Heimo repeated the suggestion of greater use of Internet as a medium of informal exchange. Swartzendruber described the CARPE email service "CARPE-List," which operates as a simple bulletin-board

or "list processor" system. Tincani asked whether USAID could begin by offering subscription to this service to those present. Mersmann suggested that a day could be added to the meetings of the European Tropical Forestry Advisors Group meetings, which rotate twice-yearly within Europe. The group will meet in Brussels in June, then in Vienna in October.

Mssrs. Carle and Tincani closed the meeting, thanking the group for their participation and noting that formal minutes of the proceedings would be sent from ODI in the coming weeks.

Meeting with ECOFAC on Research Synthesis Publication

Following the close of the Congo Basin meeting, I attended a short meeting at the ECOFAC project manager's office (Pironio), with several of the ECOFAC research scientists as well as DG VIII staff and Agreco contract personnel, including the project coordinator, Conrad Aveling. The group was discussing options for publication of the ECOFAC Phase I research findings, which to date have not been released. On behalf of CARPE, I offered to provide staff or consultant time to help Pironio or other ECOFAC staff with review of documents and preparation of a synthesis document which would be helpful for project planners and policy-makers working in the Congo Basin. The purpose would not be to try to pre-empt publication in the peer-reviewed literature, but to ensure that major findings relevant to conservation planners or other decision-makers was available in a form useful to them in the shortest possible time-frame. ECOFAC has produced a number of very interesting ideas and findings, which do not yet form part of the publicly-available literature and thus do not enter into the proposals being sent to projects such as CARPE. To avoid wasteful false starts or duplication it would seem useful to have synthesis reports pointing out new directions, challenging old assumptions, etc.

The CE managers expressed appreciation for CARPE's offer but indicated that it is premature to enter into collaboration of this type. Instead, additional funding will be made available to the research teams to produce synthesis reports which will be published in a two-volume ECOFAC series, the first volume to appear at the end of 1997, and the second sometime in early 1998. A. Gautier-Hion will be responsible for overall editing and supervision of the process, and as she now is a member of the CARPE Advisory Panel, this ensures that CARPE will have access to ECOFAC research findings.

