

Contributions of Central African countries to combat climate change

The urgent need for intersectoral coordination

Coordinating author: Richard Eba'a Atyi (1)¹

Principal authors: Denis Jean Sonwa (1), Philippe Guizol (2), Gervais Ludovic Itsoua Madzous (3), Kalamé Fobissié (7), Vincent Medjibé (3)

Contributors: Raphael Tsanga (1), Mbonayem Liboum (1), Abdon Awono (1), Lydie Flora Essamba (1), Quentin Jungers (5), Florence Palla (6)



Reforestation efforts in Democratic Republic of the Congo. Photo: CIFOR/Axel Fassio.

Towards more achievable NDCs by 2020

The countries of Central Africa made international commitments to contribute to combating climate change through their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in the context of the twenty-first Conference of the Parties (COP 21) of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Paris in 2015. As 2020 approaches, the year in which the preparations made by countries to implement the measures envisaged to combat climate change will be reviewed, there is an urgent need for the countries of Central Africa to **organise themselves to present** their state of preparedness. For a convincing case to be presented and **to attract the funding** required to attain the goals set, the countries concerned must highlight the efforts made **to improve intersectoral** coordination, thereby demonstrating that the NDC process has been successfully taken on board.

What is an NDC?

The most recent IPCC report in **October 2018 reviewed the commitments made by countries** following the Paris Agreement, which established the collective ambition to limit global warming "to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and [to pursue] efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C". The report issues a fresh warning of the threat of climate change and indicates that the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions announced in **existing commitments are insufficient** to contain global warming below the target of 2°C. The report calls for greater efforts to secure a **transition** which would make it possible to achieve a 1.5°C rise. In this context, a review of how the Central African countries are putting their commitments into practice is both useful and a matter of urgency.

NDCs are based on the principle of a voluntary commitment made by the countries. They encourage cooperation between countries to achieve common goals in a coordinated manner in the fight against climate change. These goals must lead to a reduction of 45% in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 in relation to 2010 levels for

¹ (1) CIFOR; (2) CIRAD/CIFOR; (3) COMIFAC; (4) OFAC; (5) OFAC/CIRAD; 6 (OFAC/FRMi); (7) FOKABS/University of Ottawa, Canada

the temperature rise to remain below the target of 1.5°C. The NDCs must also be founded on the principle of shared and differentiated responsibility: each country presents its NDC based on its circumstances, capacities and development priorities. An NDC must ensure consistency between national goals for economic growth, adaptation and mitigation. By aggregating the commitments obtained from all countries, the IPCC can see at a global level the direction in which the world is headed.

The NDCs must generate trust and, in accordance with the Paris Agreement, they must be constructed in such a way as to encourage transparency, accuracy, comprehensiveness, comparability and consistency. The trajectories proposed must be devised in relation to a baseline scenario that represents 'business as usual'. Each country's efforts relating to its climate change goals of adaptation and mitigation can be measured against this baseline. **The countries are obliged to submit new NDCs every five years and are encouraged to revise and strengthen them before 2020.**

The NDCs cover multiple sectors and take account of land use (agriculture, forestry and other land use – AFOLU), energy, transport, waste management and industry. Forestry plays an important adaptation and mitigation role in Central Africa.

Characteristics of the NDCs of COMIFAC member countries

Despite having been rapidly formulated during the Paris summit, the NDCs of Central African countries show a degree of convergence. The documents concerned mention both adaptation goals, a priority for Africa and perceived as more closely related to development, and mitigation goals. This reflects the long-standing involvement of the countries of the Congo Basin in the negotiations on climate and REDD+. However, all countries in the region acknowledge that these NDCs need to be revisited to make them more accurate and realistic.

Thus, forestry, agriculture, land (territorial planning) and energy occupy an important place in the region's NDCs. These sectors include actions to adapt to and mitigate climate change (Figure 1), some of them conducted in synergy. The aim of the actions proposed includes effective forest management, avoiding deforestation and/or reforesting areas of land (Figure 2). Together these responses go beyond the forestry sector to coincide with the diagnoses of the REDD+ Strategies, which highlighted several direct and indirect factors in deforestation, and with the analyses of national adaptation documents (NAP/NAPCC, etc.). In addition to the land sector, the NDCs take account of other development needs – energy, waste, transport, etc. – given the ambitions of the countries, while seeking the most resilient and low-carbon way forward.

The NDCs reflect the socioeconomic, ecological and historical diversity found in the sub-region. These differences translate as different baseline years and commitment periods and as conditional and unconditional commitments (Table 1). Together, the countries of Central Africa require 117.9 million dollars to achieve a reduction of approximately 455 Mt CO₂ by 2030-2035 (Table 1). A significant proportion of this funding depends on international aid, and the countries concerned have expressed a need for capacity-building. One issue common to all the countries is the need to disseminate their international commitment to all sectors at national level to ensure that it is taken on board by all actors.

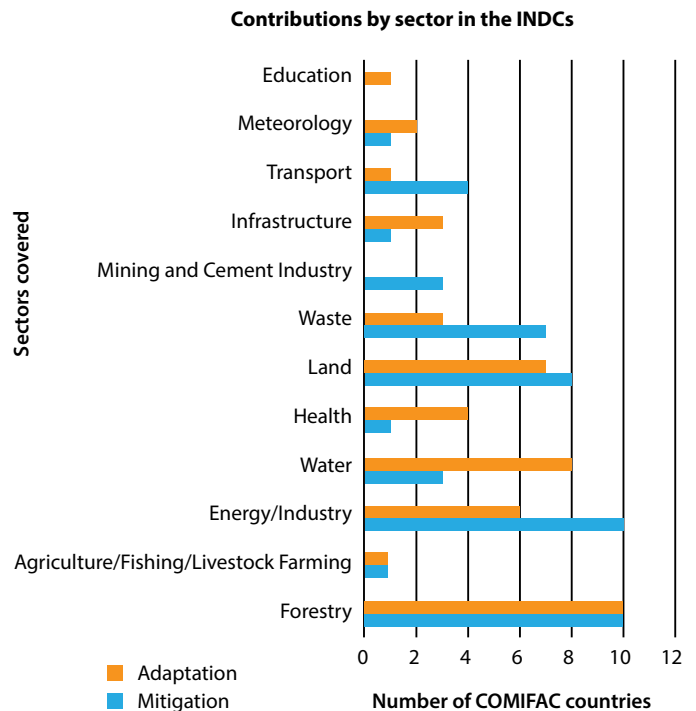


Figure 1: Sectors covered by the NDCs

Source: Fobissié et al. 2016

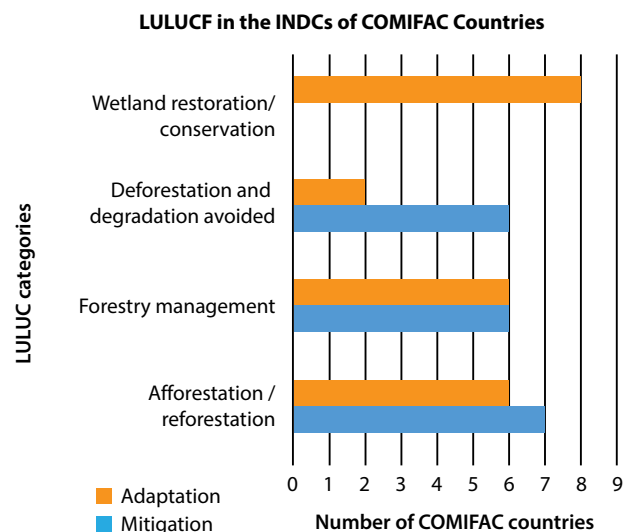


Figure 2: Fobissie et al. 2016

LULUCF: Land use, land-use change and forestry

Table 1: Funding needed to implement the NDCs

Country	Funding in Billions USD	Reduction level (Mt CO ₂ eq)	Reduction level (%)	Baseline year	Period of commitment	Conditional (C) Unconditional (U) Contribution
Burundi	1.49	16	23	2005	2016-2030	U & C
Cameroon	11.79	71	32	2010	2035	C
CAR	3.69	5.5	5	2010	2030	U & C
Congo, Rep.	6.39	19.00	48	2000	2015-2035	C
Equatorial Guinea	3.94	6.6	20 & 50	2010	2030 & 2050	C
Gabon	11.79	1	50	2000	2010-2030	U & C
DRC	21.62	73.00	17	2000	2021-2030	C
Rwanda	24.15	45.54			2030	C
Sao Tomé & Príncipe	11.79	0.06	24	2005	2020-2030	C
Chad	21.23	203.7	71	2010	2015-2030	U & C
Total	117.882	455.4				

Source: Fobissié et al. 2016

Climate governance in Central African countries

A multitude of actors – governments, national and international NGOs, international organisations, private sector, etc. – occupy the climate politics arena in Central Africa. They more or less agree on the leading role played by the forestry sector and REDD+ in formulating the responses to climate change in the heart of the continent. Until now, the debate on climate in Central Africa has focused on forestry and, to a lesser degree, on energy and agriculture. One of the challenges today is to involve other sectors and to ensure interaction between sectors, for example from the point at which scenarios are developed. It is difficult for all actors in the sub-region to be up-to-date with international climate negotiations.

Although the countries have begun to identify the sectors of energy, health, food security and water as important in how to respond to adapting to climate change, the region's various political instruments in these sectors take insufficient account of climate concerns.

In the context of REDD+, it has become apparent that the direct and indirect factors of deforestation vary in nature and so, to reverse the emissions trend in Central Africa, inter-sector solutions are required that include non-forestry sectors.

However, the way that each State's apparatus functions – organised into sectoral silos – makes it difficult to formulate and implement climate commitments at a national level, something

that demands intra- and inter-sector coordination. Often each sector has its own policy and mandate. Sometimes, within a sector such as environment and forestry, the responsibilities are spread across several ministerial departments or government agencies. In addition, the formulation of NDCs requires technical and political coordination from the outset. From a technical perspective, details of the commitments must be accurately assessed for each sector and then approved by an agency with the necessary authority. At the same time, the commitments must be politically approved and deployed at institutional level by means of a legal or regulatory instrument that is binding on all sectors. As well as the need for wide-ranging consultation, as the country is committing itself to a particular trajectory of development, the process of approving (and endorsing) the commitment must take place in the upper echelons of national politics, such as at prime ministerial or presidential level.

Intersectoral coordination is important for operationalising the climate response and for recording the emissions avoided and/or the carbon stocks accumulated by each country. This information is also useful both to the UNFCCC and for effective development planning within the country. Coordination is again required at national level in the countries, before being passed down to sub-national (judicial) and regional (COMIFAC/ECCAS) levels.

NDCs position the question of development at the heart of the climate debate, and this is a major issue too for the countries of the sub-region. Low-carbon development trajectories need to be identified that are compatible with the countries' targets for growth and that are resilient enough to withstand the impacts of climate change. This new generation of NDCs enables the link to be established between development, adaptation and mitigation.

Expectations and interests of the countries concerned

Each of the countries of Central Africa has formulated national economic development policies that are often linked to their desire to emerge as an economic player. In this region, these so-called economic emergence policies are largely based on different forms of land use – agriculture, forestry, mining – and are aimed at reducing poverty and creating jobs. On the basis of shared and differentiated responsibility, the Central African countries expect the contribution they make to combating climate change to consolidate their quest for economic development by means of low-carbon development trajectories. They expect significant financial contributions from the international community to enable them to realise their ambitions. Already suffering the harmful effects of climate change, the countries of the sub-region, which are home to the second largest tropical forest area in the world, are seeking major support for adaptation. Given the mitigation and adaptation potential of the Congo Basin forests, these countries hope to be able to attract additional funding to protect this forestry heritage. To give their requests greater credence, the countries of the sub-region must take on board the NDC process and must highlight the actions financed by their national budgets.

Recommendations

Intersectoral coordination: The NDC period demands the transformation of all development sectors in the Central African countries. Sectoral development policies and/or strategies must be reviewed to increase their resilience (adaptation) and reduce their carbon emissions (mitigation). A focal point for each international agreement within each ministry is not enough to achieve the transformational changes required by climate transition.

Political leadership and responsibility: Coordinating the formulation/revision and implementation of NDCs requires technical and political leadership that goes beyond a single ministry of the environment/forestry. Planning and finance ministries and prime ministerial and presidential departments have a highly strategic role to play in the technical and/or political leadership of NDCs. These structures cannot simply play a monitoring role and must be involved in drawing up and implementing the NDCs. Intra- and inter-sector coordination must not be limited to capital cities but must be gradually put in place too at sub-national (provincial/regional) level.

Sub-regional consistency and integration: As well as facilitating exchanges of experience between countries in formulating, revising and implementing the NDCs, COMIFA must allow for significant consideration of other sectors throughout the process.

The countries should apply to the Green Climate Fund (GCF): Through its Project Preparation Facility (PPF), the GCF has a crucial role to play in helping countries which are ready to work to convert their NDCs into ambitious policies and measures. By building national capacities, the PPF helps countries establish a portfolio of effective projects for achieving their NDC goals. It can serve as a rapidly available tool for increasing inter-sector coordination.

Coordinating climate risk management in Central Africa: The countries of the Congo Basin must exchange information more effectively between sectors and countries to build their capacities for adaptation. This will lead to greater integration and prevention of risks when new projects are being set up. This applies, for example, in the case of projects relating to LULUCF sectors, where extreme temperature rises and associated droughts can affect crop yields, multiply the frequency of wild fires and increase the need for irrigation.

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