



THE FORESTS OF THE CONGO BASIN

State of the Forest 2006

The Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP)

The CBFP is a non-binding Type II partnership composed of approximately 30 governmental and non-governmental organizations. It was launched at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa in order to promote the sustainable management of the forests of the Congo Basin and improve the quality of life of the region's inhabitants. The CBFP's main objectives are to improve communication among its members and support coordination between members' projects, programs, and policies.

The partnership is facilitated by one member of the partnership. Facilitation by the United States, from 2003 to 2004, has been followed by French facilitation since February 2005. The partnership works by bringing its members together periodically to exchange information.

The partnership actions are concentrated on six priority areas:

- strengthening mechanisms for regional consensus-building,
- establishing a working group for funding mechanisms,
- increasing human capacity within the regional forest/environment sector,
- strengthening the Executive Secretariat of COMIFAC,
- improving governance within the forest sector
- promoting and communicating on the activities of the CBFP and its members.

The thirty founding members of the CBFP fall into three major categories: governments, inter-governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. As a group, the founding members committed to financing and/or implementing programs in line with the CBFP priority areas that totaled tens of millions of dollars over three to five years. Since its foundation, additional governments and non-governmental organizations have joined the partnership.

Partners

Governments

- Republic of South Africa (DWAF)
- Germany (BMZ, GTZ)
- Belgium (MAECECD)
- Cameroon (ONADEF)
- Canada (ACDI)
- European Union (EC, ECOFAC, JRC)
- USA (DSPI, CARPE-USAID)
- France (MAE, AFD, MEDD, CIRAD)
- Equatorial Guinea
- Gabon
- Japan (Embassy of Japan in France)
- Netherlands (SNV)
- Central African Republic
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Republic of Congo (MEFE)
- United Kingdom (DFID)

Intergovernmental organizations

- World Bank
- COMIFAC
- FAO
- World Mecanism
- ITTO
- UNESCO
- GRASP

NGOs, research groups and associations

- American Forest & Paper Association
- *Association technique internationale des bois tropicaux* (ATIBT)
- Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)
- Conservation International (CI)
- Forest Trends
- Jane Goodall Institute (JGI)
- Society of American Foresters
- World Conservation Union (IUCN)
- Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)
- World Resources Institute (WRI)
- World Wildlife Fund (WWF-USA)
- World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Int'l)

To find out more: <http://www.cbfp.org/>

List of contributors

Coordination

Didier Devers (UMD-OSFAC)*
Jean Pierre Vande weghe (EU)*

Scientific committee

Alain Billand (CIRAD)
Bernard Cassagne (FRM)*
Jean-Louis Doucet (FUG)
Robert Nasi (CIFOR)*
Théodore Tréfon (RMCA)*
Caroline Tutin

General contributions

Marcellin Agnagna (IGEFE MEFE)
Jean-Pierre Agnangoye (RAPAC)*
Elie Baleke (WWF)
Pyther Banza (WWF)
Alain Bebu (WWF)
Lambert Bene Bene (WWF)
Christophe Besacier (MAE-France)*
Yalolo Bisidi (WWF)
Stephen Blake (WCS)*
Didier Bokelo Bile (AWF)*
Bruno Bokoto de Semboli (WWF)*
Juan-Carlos Bonilla (CI)
Romain Calaque (WCS)
Matthew Cassetta (US State Department)*
Erica Cochrane (WWF)
Alejandra Colom (Anthropologist)*
Bryan Curran (WCS)
Emmanuel de Mérode (EU)
Alain Daumerie (SEFCA)
Brigitte Decadt (Belgium)*
Bernard De Schrevel (Belgian Embassy in DRC)*
Pauwel De Wachter (WWF)
Carlos De Wasseige (UCL)*
Pierre Defourny (UCL)*
Louis Dejo (WWF)
Marc Dethier (WWF)
Lamert Diowo (MAE-DRC)*
Guy Patrice Dkamela (CARPE)
Jacqueline Doremus (CARPE)*
Charles Doumenge (CIRAD)*
Jef Dupain (AWF)*
Paul Elkan (WCS)*
Jack Etsa (WWF)
John Flynn (USAID)*
Eric Forni (CIRAD)*
Norbert Gami (WCS)*
Jean Gérard (CIRAD)*
Maryke Gray (IGCP)
Jefferson Hall (WCS)
Matthew Hansen (SDSU)*

John Hart (WCS)*
Terese Hart (WCS)
Bas Huijbregts (WWF)
Olly Hymas (WCS)*
Omari Ilambu (WWF)
Bili-Isia Inogwabini (WWF)
André Kamdem Toham (WWF)*
Alain Karsenty (CIRAD)*
Christopher Kernan (CI)
Léonard Kikukama (WWF)
Déo Kujirakwinja (WCS)
Marc Languy (WWF)
Stéphane Le Duc Yeno
Miguel Leal (MBG)
Michelle Lee (SI)
Raymond Lumbuenamo (WWF)*
Marthinique Lusuna (WWF)
Aimée Luzingu (ERAIFT-UNESCO)
Fiona Maisels (WCS)*
Sébastien Malele (DGF)*
Richard Malonga
Emile Mamfoumbi Kombila (MEFEPPN)
Sami Mankoto wa Mbaelele (UNESCO-RAPAC)*
Philippe Mayaux (EU-JRC)*
Déo Mbula (ICCN)
Patrick Mehlman (CI)*
Benoît Mertens (WRI)*
Pierre Méthot (WRI)*
Justin Mupanda (WWF)
Jonas Nagahuedi (COMIFAC)
Tomosaki Nishihara (WCS)
François-Basile Ntimba Mpat (COMIFAC)*
Zacharie Nzoo (WWF)
Crisantos Obama Ondo (INDEFOR)
Rufin Oko (COMIFAC)*
Nicanor Ona Nze (COMIFAC)
Nigel Orbell (WCS)
Han Overman (WCS)
Richard Parnell (WCS)
Patrice Passe Sanand (OCDN)
Olivier S.G. Pauwels (SI)
Hugo Raynay (WCS)
Doreen Robinson (USAID)*
Micheline Salima (WWF)
Filippo Saracco (EU)*
Jeffrey Sayer (WWF)*
Fabien Sordet (EU)*
Malcolm Starkey (WCS)
Lisa Steel (WWF)*
Emma J Stokes (WCS)*
Tambwe Mutindi Moyo (DGF-DRC)
Nicodème Tchamou (CARPE)*

Véronique Tshimalanga (CARPE)*
Richard Tshombe (WCS)
Jacques Tunguni (COMIFAC)
Léonard Usongo (WWF)*
Prosper Uwingeri (ORTPN)
Françoise Van de Ven (Syndicate of Foresters-DRC)*
Gretchen Walters (MBG)
Lee White (WCS)
David Yanggen (USAID)*

Text revision

Patrice Christy (French version)
Conrad Aveling (English version)
Paya de Marcken (English version)

Cartography

Pierre Defourny (UCL)
Didier Devers (UMD-OSFAC)
Grégory Duveiller (UCL)
Matthew Hansen (SDSU)
Philippe Mayaux (EU-JRC)
Benoît Mertens (WRI)

Pictures

AWF: 20.3, 20.4
FRM: 4.1, 10.1
Kim Gjerstad: 2.2, 2.7, 3.4, 3.5, 5.1, 5.3, 19.2, 19.6, 21.4, 22.3, 22.4, 23.2, 23.5, 23.6
Teresa Hart: 6.1
Martin Harvey: 23.3
Filipp Henschel: 1.6
Emmanuel Mve Mebia: 15.7
Richard Oslisly: 15.3
Rob Ross: 2.1, 14.3, 14.4, 15.2, 17.2, 17.3
Jean Pierre Vande weghe: 1.5, 1.7, 5.4, 6.2, 7.3, 11.2, 12.2, 12.4, 12.5, 13.2, 13.3, 13.5, 13.6, 13.8, 13.10, 14.5, 14.7, 15.5, 15.6, 15.8
Filip Verbelen: 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 3.1, 5.5, 5.6, 13.7, 16.3, 18.2, 18.3, 19.4, 20.5
WCS-Gabon: 5.2

Moderator of the meeting in Kinshasa on

March 15-17, 2006

Jeffrey Sayer (WWF)

*) participant of the meeting in Kinshasa on March 15-17, 2006

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Preface

The Congo Basin Forest Partnership, which includes now 33 members of governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and research groups, was launched at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg to focus world attention on the conservation of the second largest tropical rain forest in the world. The CBFP is a call to arms to ensure that the great biodiversity resources of this region are maintained for the ultimate benefit of the citizens of Central Africa and for global environmental health. This Partnership was inspired by the Central African Heads of State whose commitment and affirmation to the principles of international cooperation were upheld in the 1999 Yaoundé Declaration. These commitments were restated during a second Heads of State summit in Brazzaville in 2005.

Little objective information on the condition and extent of this vast natural resource is available to decision-makers and stakeholders, making a concerted international plan of action, in the framework of the CBFP, difficult to establish. Furthermore, while it is generally considered that the forest is being rapidly degraded and biodiversity lost, there has not been a widely available system to help interested stakeholders understand the seriousness and origin of the threats and the impacts, both positive and negative, of human activities on the forest. This kind of information is of vital necessity for the CBFP partners to gauge the effectiveness of their efforts and to prioritize actions for efficient use of scarce conservation resources.

This first State of the Forest report is a joint effort between the partners and stakeholders to pool information from all available sources in one document. The effort to monitor this vast resource we believe will strengthen the partnership, build a common understanding of the challenges, successes and even failures and guide future common approaches. This is not intended to be a scientific document in the usual sense, but rather should serve to foster dialog amongst partners, build capacity in the region to monitor the resource base and serve as an inspiration for present and future partners.

We expect that as the experience grows, the State of the Forest will evolve to consider specific challenges and thematic topics. The partners are to be congratulated for rising to the challenge laid down at the WSSD to conserve the valuable Congo Basin natural resources as a tool toward poverty alleviation for the millions of Central Africans that depend on forest resources for their livelihoods.

The current level of collaboration for tropical forest conservation is, by any measure, unprecedented. We believe that future editions of this important State of the Forest report process will only serve to solidify the partnership and to strengthen resolve to conserve the rich flora and fauna of the Congo Basin while helping its citizens and their children to enjoy a more prosperous future.

Jonas Nagahuedi Mbongu Sodi
Executive Secretary/COMIFAC

Denys Gauer
French Ambassador for
the Environment
CBFP Facilitator

Robert Hellyer
Mission Director
USAID
Democratic Republic
of Congo

Ambassador Carlo
De Filippi
Head of the European
Commission Delegation in the
Democratic Republic
of Congo

Foreword

The 2006 State of the Forest (SoF) report on the Congo Basin serves as a follow up to the preliminary report distributed at the 2005 Summit of the Heads of State of Central Africa in Brazzaville. In 2004, WWF and WCS proposed the idea of publishing a ‘State of the Forest’ within the framework of the CBF. This idea was adopted by the CARPE program. Initially, the report was to have appeared in two stages: a preliminary 40-page summary to be followed a few months later by a more exhaustive report. The summary was finalized in the second half of 2004 and appeared in print at the end of January 2005. Its preparation was coordinated by a drafting committee primarily comprised of American experts linked to CARPE. As a result, the report focused on the actions and results of the CARPE program. It was principally financed by USAID, although the European Union also contributed by providing the financial means to solicit the input of a specialist and translate the document into French.

The 2006 report is an in depth follow-up to the preliminary report and represents a collaborative effort on the part of the CBF partners. Preparations for the 2006 SoF began in September 2005. Since then, over 110 experts have contributed to its development and in February 2006 a preliminary version was submitted to a scientific committee. On March 15-17, 2006 a meeting was held in Kinshasa where the preliminary version was presented to some fifty experts representing CBF partners and the scientific committee. The purpose of this meeting was not to discuss in detail the content of the 2006 report, but rather to draw useful lessons from the drafting process and reflect on a procedure for subsequent versions, including guidelines to be established and specific themes to be addressed.

Forests

The word forest has many different meanings; some legal or utilitarian definitions are so vague that they include not only the true forests¹, but also woodlands and wooded savannahs. However, contrary to what is commonly presented, not all savannahs² are degraded forests. Savannahs are their own rich vegetation type, and despite the fact that some savannahs produce wood, they represent a unique ecosystem. They necessitate different management systems and should be considered alongside forests and deserts. Accordingly,

this report on the state of the forests of Central Africa is specifically concerned with dense humid forests.

Objectives

This 2006 SoF report aims to present the ‘baseline’ state, a starting point from which subsequent reports can be compared. As such, it is a working document that serves as both a monitoring tool and a coordination instrument for the CBF.

Timeframe

This report is primarily based on data from 2004 and 2005; data from after December 31, 2005 have not been incorporated.

Target audience

The SoF report’s primary audience is CBF partners, from policy and administrative decision makers to technicians and managers. However to ensure maximum transparency, the report should also be circulated beyond this ‘specialized’ group. To this effect, it was proposed at the Kinshasa meeting to produce multiple versions of the report for different audiences.

Structure and content

The report is divided into three main parts:

- Chapters 1-6 offer an overview of the Congo Basin forests, human populations in the forest, industrial logging, conservation, the threats to biodiversity and forest resources and priority actions to be undertaken.
- Chapters 7-11 provide more detailed information on specific cross-cutting themes.
- Chapters 12-23 detail the Landscapes.

The 2006 report builds off of the 2005 preliminary report by developing in greater detail aspects that are considered imperative both to facilitate interpretation of the 2006 report and to facilitate understanding of subsequent reports. These subsequent reports, the frequency of which is still to be decided by the CBF partners, will develop additional cross-cutting themes—and there is no shortage of them—but will only include the Landscapes in a more condensed form at intervals of 2, 3 or 5 years. Therefore, subsequent reports will likely be shorter and focus on

¹ Forests are habitats where trees are dominant, where tree crowns form a more or less continuous layer and where grasses are virtually absent in the under story. The few grasses which are found in forests have broad leaves and are very different from savannah species. Forests are sensitive to fire.

² Savannahs are a grassy habitat type with or without woody vegetation of variable density. This woody vegetation is mostly fire-resistant.

changes or the priority actions that emerge as a result of these changes.

As much as possible, the 2006 report has been based on measurable indicators reflecting (1) pressures on the forest and its renewable resources, (2) the state of these pressures and (3) management measures undertaken to mitigate, as much as possible, the harmful effects of principal pressures. To this effect, a preliminary set of indicators was compiled based on existing documents produced through the CARPE program, the ECOFAC program (Pabanel & Pedrono, 2003), and WWF and World Bank activities. At a November 3-4, 2006 meeting in Kinshasa, the chosen indicators were presented for discussion and amendment to a panel of experts representing the main CBFP members.

The final set comprises three series of indicators:

- institutional and legislative indicators at the national scale (Annex A),
- industrial logging indicators at the national scale (Annex B),
- indicators concerning biodiversity at the Landscape level (Annex C)

Data collection forms were then circulated to the Landscape leaders and COMIFAC. The results obtained are summarized in the form of tables in Annexes A-C. Certain figures have been included in the various chapters of the report as well as in the data sheets for each country (Annex D).

The SoF process

The 2006 report constitutes the beginning of a process that is to be developed over the long term. This has proved to be essential in order to coordinate and evaluate the actions of the many CBFP partners and particularly to identify at regular intervals the directions to follow and the priority actions to be carried out with respect to management, conservation and sustainable exploitation of the renewable natural resources of the forests of the Congo Basin. This process will therefore involve all CBFP players.

Lessons learned

Preparing the 2006 report proved to be more complicated than expected and highlighted a number of difficulties in the way the CBFP currently operates in the field. It demonstrated that communications among the sectors of the same Landscape, or among NGOs acting in the same Landscape, need to be improved. This is especially true in Landscapes which straddle national borders. It also showed that Landscape managers and officials in government administration are hampered by problems associated with information, including access to information, the fact that information available on the same subject is often incompatible and the fact that the historical knowledge of experts and projects is somewhat superficial, often going back little more than ten years. It revealed gaps in technical knowledge and highlighted the need to produce a database or network of databases to remedy these obstacles. Finally, it clearly demonstrated that a great deal of work remains to be done before a significant set of measurable and realistic indicators can be elaborated.

The 2006 report therefore contains many gaps and, in several places, lacks precision. However, the fact that such a far reaching effort has been completed within a relatively short timeframe is a major success. Indeed it is the first time in the history of conservation in Central Africa that such a large number of partners and stakeholders, scattered over a vast forest area as well as three continents and facing chronic communication problems related to logistical difficulties inherent in the region, have managed to pool their ideas in a single document.

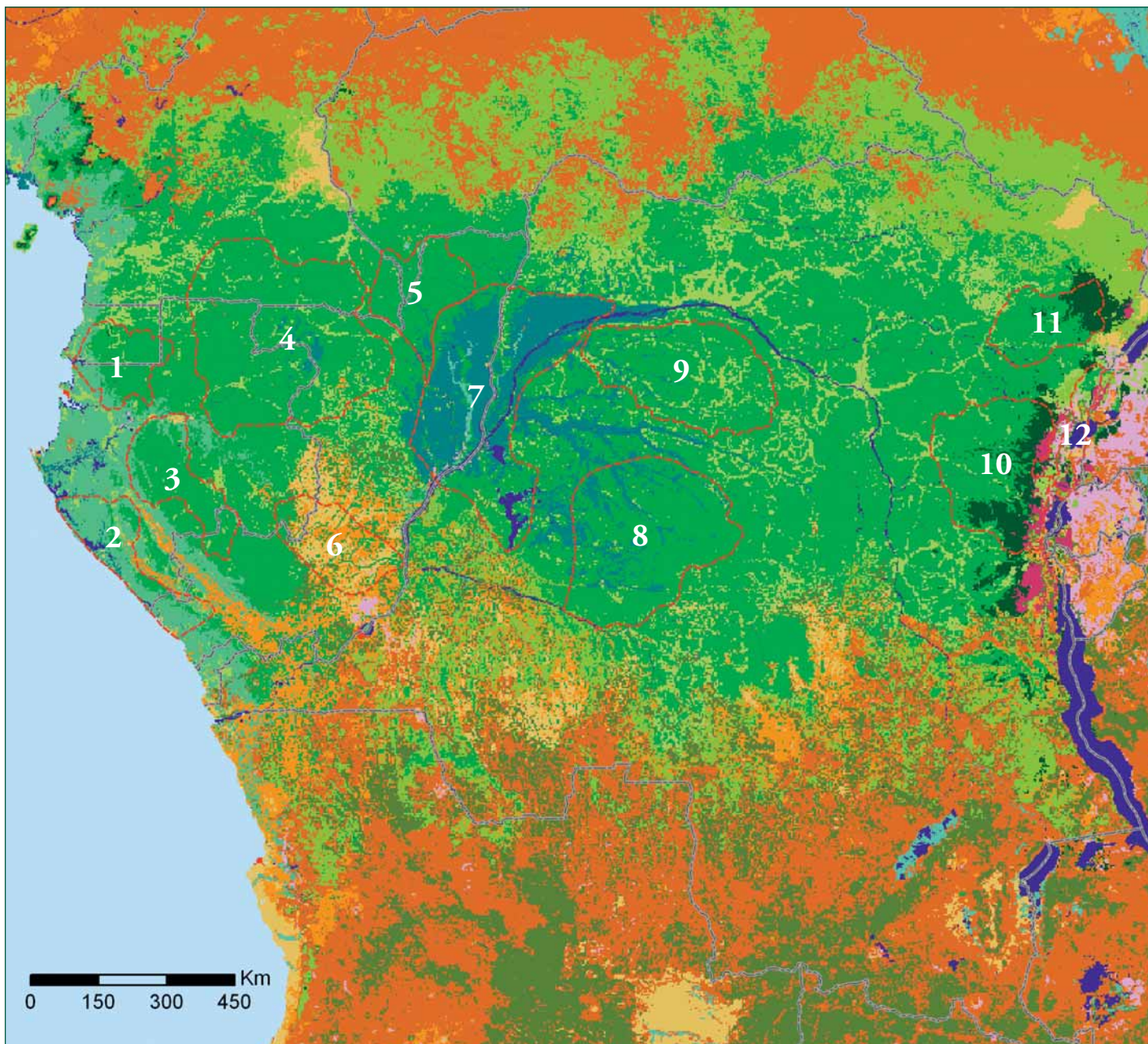


Figure 1.1. The forests of Central Africa (Source: JRC)



1. Monte Alén-Monts de Cristal Landscape
2. Gamba-Mayumba-Conkouati Landscape
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