

Central African countries' international commitments on climate change

Coordinator: Denis Jean Sonwa¹

Authors: Richard Sufo Kankeu,² Gervais Itsoua Madzous,³ Eugene Loh Chia,^{4,5} Vincent Medjibe,⁶ Christine Langevin,⁷ Leslie Ouarzazi,⁷ Sophia Carodenuto,⁸ Wilfran Moufouma-Okia,⁹ Philippe Guizol,¹⁰ Michel Ndjatsana,³ Jérôme Ebuy,¹¹ Nadji Tellro Wai,¹² Moïse Tsayem Demaze,² Felicien Kengoum,¹³ Chrislain Eric Kenfack,¹⁴ Youssoufa Bele,¹⁵ Kalame Fobissie,^{16,5} Martial Gapia,¹⁷ and Narcisse Landry Kevis Kossi¹⁷

¹CIFOR-Cameroun, ²Le Mans University, France, ³Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC), ⁴University of Pretoria, South Africa, ⁵FOKABS, Canada, ⁶National Agency for National Parks (ANPN), Gabon, ⁷United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York, ⁸University of Victoria, Canada, ⁹World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Geneva, ¹⁰Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD), ¹¹University of Kisangani (UNIKIS), Democratic Republic of the Congo, ¹²Ministry of the Environment, Fisheries and Sustainable Development, Chad, ¹³BrightWay Consult, Cameroon, ¹⁴Consultant from Canada, ¹⁵Consultant from Canada, ¹⁶University of Ottawa, ¹⁷University of Bangui, Central African Republic

Photo by Olivier Girard/CIFOR



Introduction

Article 4 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) sets out the main commitments of the Parties, “taking into account their common but differentiated responsibilities and their specific national and regional development priorities, objectives and circumstances”. As Central African countries work to revise their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement and strengthen their efforts to meet their international climate change commitments, it is important that we take stock of the current situation.

This chapter presents all these commitments and provides an overview of how well Central African countries have upheld their commitments under the UNFCCC and on combating climate change more generally. These commitments include binding commitments (e.g. National Communications, Biennial Update Reports (BURs) and NDCs) on the one hand and voluntary commitments on the other (e.g. National Action Plans for Adaptation to Climate Change (NAPAs), REDD+, Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs), Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), UN-REDD, Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI), AFR100 Initiative, Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT), Forest Investment Programme (FIP), and high forest/low deforestation (HLFD)). We will conclude by identifying lessons learned and the outlook for these commitments.

7.1 Binding commitments within the framework of the UNFCCC

7.1.1 Obligations under the UNFCCC

National Communications and Biennial Update Reports

Under Article 4 of the UNFCCC, National Communications from countries must provide up-to-date information on:

- Greenhouse gas inventories;
- Adaptation;
- Mitigation measures and their effects;
- Challenges and gaps;
- Support needed and received, as well as other information relevant to the achievement of the Convention’s objectives.

Article 12 of the UNFCCC provides that developing country parties to the UNFCCC must submit their first communications within three years of the entry into force of the Convention for them or of the availability of financial resources. In 2010, the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16) determined that National Communications must be submitted every four years in line with the revised guide on preparing the National Communications of non-Annex I Parties. Biennial Update Reports must be submitted every 2 years and must update the information provided in the National Communications, in particular with regard to national greenhouse gas inventories, mitigation actions, challenges and gaps, including support required and received, based on the biennial update reporting guidelines.

The main obligation of Central African countries not listed under Annex I to the UNFCCC is to submit a National Communication. Below, we examine the extent to which each country has fulfilled this obligation.

Figure 7.1 shows that all Central African countries have submitted their first National Communication and that the majority of countries did so on average 5 years after the UNFCCC entered into force for them. A second National Communication was submitted by nine out of the ten countries, an average of 9 years after the submission of their first communication. Four countries (Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Sao Tome and Principe) have already submitted their third National Communication, on average 6 years after the submission of their second. Therefore, every Central African country party to the UNFCCC except Equatorial Guinea has submitted at least two National Communications. There is a large gap, of close to a decade, between the submission of countries' first and second communications, mainly due to administrative delays and a lack of technical capacity. The gap between the submission of their second and third National Communications is, however, shorter, because teams have become more familiar with the guidelines and technical capacity has improved over time.

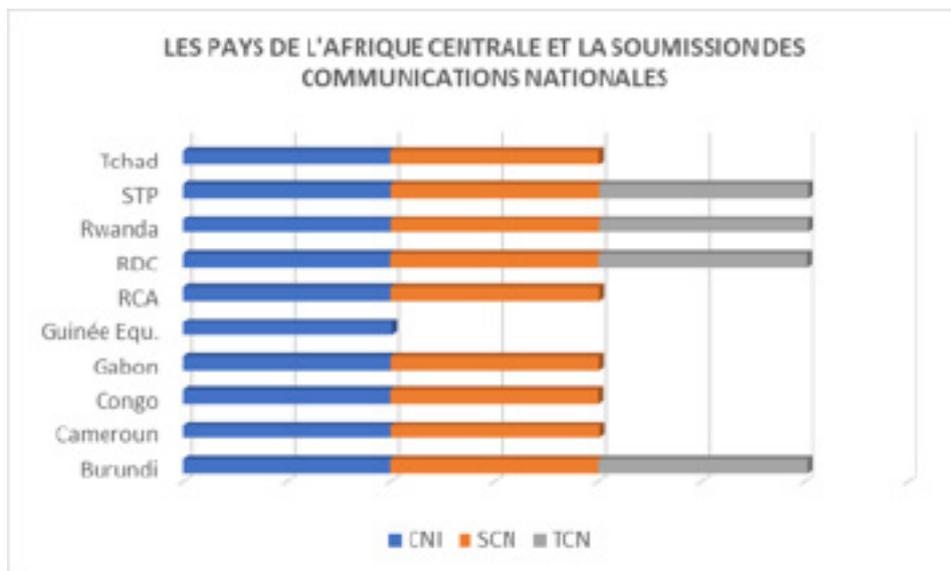


Figure 7.1: Submission of National Communications by Central African countries

Legend: CNI: First National Communication; SCN: Second National Communication; TCN: Third National Communication

Even so, Central African countries are lagging behind. To date, 85 non-Annex 1 Parties have submitted their third National Communication, 12 have submitted their fourth and one has submitted its sixth.

Table 7.1 details the date that each Central African country reached each UNFCCC National Communication milestone.

Only Rwanda has submitted a Biennial Update Report to date, even though – according to the decisions adopted at the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) held in 2011 – the first reports were expected by 31 December 2014. This deadline is, naturally, dependent on national capacity and how much support countries have been provided to prepare the reports. Globally, 64 non-Annex 1 Parties have submitted their first Biennial Update Report and 5 have submitted their fourth.

Table 7.1: National Communications and Biennial Update Reports under the UNFCCC: Status of Central African countries' submissions

No.	Country	Date of ratification	Years National Communications submitted	Year Biennial Update Report submitted
1	Burundi	1997	First: 2001 Second: 2010 Third: 2019	0
2	Cameroon	1994	First: 2005 Second: 2016 Third:	0
3	Republic of the Congo	1996	First: 2001 Second: 2009 Third:	0
4	Gabon	1998	First: 2004 Second: 2011	0
5	Equatorial Guinea	2000	First: 2019 Second: Third:	0
6	Central African Republic	1995	First: 2003 Second: 2015 Third:	0
7	DRC	1995	First: 2000 Second: 2009 Third: 2015	0
8	Rwanda	1998	First: 2005 Second: 2012 Third: 2018	December 2021
9	Sao Tome and Principe	1999	First: 2005 Second: 2012 Third: 2019	0
10	Chad	1993	First: 2001 Second: 2012 Third: The process has started, but has been marred by irregularities that remain to be resolved.	The process has started, but has been marred by irregularities that remain to be resolved.

Source: Data compiled from countries' first, second and third National Communications.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

At COP17 (Durban, South Africa), the Parties to the UNFCCC recognized the need for all countries to take urgent action to address the serious and potentially irreversible threat of climate change. Following COP17, steps were taken to prepare a post-2020 agreement under the Convention, another legal instrument or legally-binding text agreed by and applicable to all parties, as described in Decision 1/CP.17 and recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), to keep the increase in global average temperature below 2°C or 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. In this spirit, 2 years later at COP19 (Warsaw, Poland) the Parties were invited to begin or step up the preparation of their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions. These contributions were then communicated the day before COP21, held in Paris, and would become the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of each party to the Paris Agreement once they had deposited their ratification instrument.

All Central African countries submitted their first NDCs under the Paris Agreement in accordance with this process (see Table 7.2). A regional plan of action for the implementation of the Paris Agreement was prepared by COMIFAC and approved by an extraordinary session of its Council of Ministers in May 2016. Unfortunately, this plan has not yet been implemented.

Table 7.2: Summary of Nationally Determined Contributions submitted by Central African countries in 2015 and date of submission of updates

No.	Country	Emissions reduction commitment (percentage by 2030)	Mitigation (focus and priority sectors)	Adaptation (focus and priority sectors)	Outlook, specific measures	Date of submission of improved versions of first NDCs
1	Burundi	Between 3 percent (unconditional reduction) and 20 percent (conditional reduction)	Energy, forestry, agriculture, technology transfer	Water, energy, forestry, agriculture, livestock	Continuation of the traditional development model, greener measures subject to external assistance, valuation of ecosystem services, request for compensation	5 October 2021
2	Cameroon	32 percent (by 2035) subject to international funding	Sectoral policies (forestry, agriculture, energy), technology transfer, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, energy, waste	National resilience plan (agriculture, livestock, fisheries, land use, energy, industry, forestry, water, health, social)	Continuation of the traditional development model, greener measures subject to external assistance, reducing carbon footprint without slowing down economic growth	11 October 2021

Continued on the next page

Table 7.2: continued

No.	Country	Emissions reduction commitment (percentage by 2030)	Mitigation (focus and priority sectors)	Adaptation (focus and priority sectors)	Outlook, specific measures	Date of submission of improved versions of first NDCs
3	Republic of the Congo	Between 48 percent (by 2025) and 55 percent (by 2035) with conditions	Energy, industrial processes and waste treatment, mining and cement production, agriculture and livestock, forestry and land use	Risk management, protection of assets and production systems, technology transfer	Continuation of the traditional development model, greener measures subject to external assistance. Must not jeopardize socioeconomic development, “green economy”	2 August 2021
4	Gabon	Between 50 percent (by 2025) and 65 percent	Improving the energy efficiency of the economy, controlling emissions within the context of development	National strategy focused on coastal areas	Continuation of the traditional development model, greener measures subject to external assistance	Not yet submitted
5	Equatorial Guinea	Between 20 percent (unconditional reduction) and 50 percent (conditional reduction)	Forestry, agriculture, land use, waste, energy, transport	National plan targeting planning policies and processes, risk reduction, technical capacity building	Continuation of the traditional development model, greener measures subject to external assistance, “green economy”, economic diversification, REDD+	Not yet submitted
6	CAR	Between 5 percent (by 2030) and 25 percent (by 2050) with conditions	Reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience and sustainable management (agriculture, livestock, forestry, land use, natural resources, waste, planning, health)	Agriculture, health, infrastructure, forestry, energy, natural resources, waste, water	Continuation of the traditional development model, greener measures subject to external assistance (low-carbon development)	24 January 2022
7	DRC	17 percent (conditional reduction)	Agriculture, forestry, energy	National programme of action to secure livelihoods, rational resource management, coastal zones	Continuation of the traditional development model, greener measures subject to external assistance	28 December 2021
8	Rwanda		Reducing emissions with external assistance. Renewable energy, transport, industry, waste, forestry	Reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience and sustainable management. Agriculture, forestry, tourism, water, land use	Continuation of the traditional development model, greener measures subject to external assistance: green growth, low-carbon economy, green industries	20 May 2020

Continued on the next page

Table 7.2: continued

No.	Country	Emissions reduction commitment (percentage by 2030)	Mitigation (focus and priority sectors)	Adaptation (focus and priority sectors)	Outlook, specific measures	Date of submission of improved versions of first NDCs
9	Sao Tome and Principe	24 percent with external assistance	Renewable energy, all sectors of the economy	Reducing vulnerability and fragility and achieving resilient development. Agriculture, livestock, forestry, soil, water, energy, coasts, health, education	Continuation of the traditional development model, greener measures subject to external assistance. Carbon market	30 July 2021
10	Chad	Between 18.2 percent (unconditional reduction) and 71 percent (conditional reduction)	Technology transfer. Energy, agriculture, livestock, land use, forestry, waste.	National plan targeting priority areas and vulnerable sectors (water, agriculture, agroforestry, livestock and fisheries)	Continuation of the traditional development model, greener measures subject to external assistance. Technical needs and recourse to the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and REDD+	19 October 2021

Source: <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NDCStaging/Pages/All.aspx>

Altogether Central African countries' commitments shown in Table 7.2 should deliver a reduction of 455.4 MtCO₂e (conditional and unconditional) and represent funding needs of USD 117,882 billion for the commitment period to 2030 in most cases (Fobissie et al. 2016; Eba'a et al. 2018). A recent study has shown that the implementation of these commitments requires greater coordination between sectors within countries (Eba'a et al. 2018).

Under Article 4(2) and (9) of the Paris Agreement, the Parties must submit an NDC every five years. Countries' commitments and their progress towards achieving their NDCs should grow in ambition. Five years after the adoption and ratification of the Paris Agreement by all Central African countries, they embarked on the process of revising their NDCs or preparing new ones for submission to the UNFCCC Secretariat by the end of July 2021. Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe met this deadline. In March 2022, the UNFCCC website showed that eight countries had submitted an updated NDC (see Table 7.2). Gabon and Equatorial Guinea had not yet done so. These updated NDCs were submitted in preparation for COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland. These commitments will need to be monitored closely and a new regional plan of action for the implementation of the Paris Agreement in Central Africa should be drawn up following the submission of the revised or updated NDCs.

7.1.2 Voluntary commitments within the framework of the UNFCCC

Adaptation-related commitments (NAPAs and NAPs)

In accordance with Article 4.9 of the UNFCCC, the Conference of the Parties (COP) drew up a programme of work in 2001 to support least developed countries (LDCs) to respond to the challenges climate change poses for them due to their vulnerability. This programme of work incorporates, among other things, countries' National Action Plans for Adaptation to Climate Change (NAPAs), which seek to identify the urgent and immediate needs of LDCs for adapting to current climate change-related threats. To meet these needs, these countries aim to increase their resilience and their capacity to adapt to climate vulnerability, current extreme climate events and future climate change.

In 2010, the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process was launched under the Cancun Adaptation Framework, adopted at COP16. This process was intended to support the transition from one-off project-based interventions focused on short-term needs to more strategic approaches. It aimed to help countries put adaptation at the heart of their decision-making around development to ensure it would not be treated as an isolated environmental issue.

The Central African LDCs engaged willingly in the voluntary process of drawing up NAPAs (see Table 7.3). All countries in the subregion also recognized the need to prepare NAPs, to identify and respond to medium and long-term adaptation needs.

The NAPAs and NAPs assessed COMIFAC member countries' level of vulnerability for each climate-sensitive sector and resource. Priority activities were identified to enable each country to improve its resilience. In LDCs, NAPAs act as a focal point for the preparation of NAPs. This process is already under way in some countries, such as CAR. Cameroon, on the other hand, which is not an LDC, submitted its NAP directly. Six of the ten Central African LDCs (Burundi, Rwanda, CAR, DRC, Sao Tome and Principe, and Chad) have upheld their commitments and submitted NAPAs to the UNFCCC. These documents outline their urgent and immediate needs, which, if addressed, will enable them to respond to climate change. Equatorial Guinea has also drawn up a NAPA. Three countries (Cameroon, CAR and Chad) have a National Adaptation Plan (NAP), of which two (CAR and Chad) had first drawn up a NAPA. Gabon and the Republic of the Congo, however, have not yet submitted their NAPs to the UNFCCC.

To support countries to access climate finance, as part of its Readiness scheme, the Green Climate Fund has made a funding envelope of USD 3 million available to each developing country to help them prepare their NAPs. COMIFAC has worked with some countries in the subregion, including CAR and Equatorial Guinea, to prepare project documents for the mobilization of these funds. It would be worth examining how much funding has been mobilized for NAPs and the challenges countries face in this regard.

Table 7.3: Policy documents on adaptation under the UNFCCC: Status of Central African countries' submissions

No.	Country	Year National Action Plan for Adaptation (NAPA) submitted	Year National Adaptation Plan (NAP) submitted	Number of priority projects submitted under the NAPA and budgets	Support under the NAP
1	Burundi	February 2007	-	12 projects Urgent and immediate needs estimated at USD 7,294,000 when the NAPA was submitted in February 2007	
2	Cameroon	Non-least developed country (non-LDC)	26 October 2015		Needs for five cross-cutting projects estimated at USD 21,547,140, 15 sectoral projects at USD 100,931,340.
3	Republic of the Congo	Non-LDC	-		
4	Gabon	Non-LDC	-		
5	Equatorial Guinea	January 2013	-	Urgent and immediate needs estimated at USD 76,934 when the NAPA was submitted in January 2013	
6	CAR	June 2008	February 2022	Ten projects Urgent and immediate needs estimated at USD 3,000,000 when the NAPA was submitted in June 2008	Five projects in the first adaptation plan, not budgeted
7	DRC	September 2006	-	Three projects Urgent and immediate needs estimated at USD 16,475,654 when the NAPA was submitted in September 2006	
8	Rwanda	May 2007	-	Seven projects Urgent and immediate needs estimated at USD 8,110,000 when the NAPA was submitted in May 2007	
9	Sao Tome and Principe	November 2007	-	22 projects Urgent and immediate needs estimated at USD 11,239,500 when the NAPA was submitted in November 2007	
10	Chad	February 2010	October 2021, date of submission of Chad's first NAP	Ten projects with needs of USD 14,000,000 when the NAPA was submitted in February 2010	

Sources: https://unfccc.int/files/cooperation_support/least_developed_countries_portal/napa_project_database/application/pdf/napa_index_by_country.pdf
<https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/Pages/national-adaptation-plans.aspx>

Mitigation-related commitments (NAMAs and REDD+)

While developing countries were not required to reduce their emissions under the Kyoto Protocol, the Bali Action Plan, adopted at COP13 in 2007, marked a decisive turning point. It invited developing countries to engage in sector-specific emissions reduction efforts and pledged substantial support to those who committed to do so. These provisions were strengthened and clarified at COP15, 16 and 17.

Nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs) are measures implemented by developing country governments to reduce their emissions. They are submitted to the UNFCCC, as described in Decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 50, and aim to help countries transition from the traditional high-emissions model to a low-carbon model.

Pursuant to Decision 4/CP.15, countries must prepare four key documents to ensure their readiness for the REDD+ process: a national forest monitoring system (FMS); a forest reference (emission) level (FREL/FRL); safeguards and a safeguards information system (SIS); and national strategies and/or action plans for REDD+. Countries may also deliver a communication plan for their REDD+ activities. Table 7.4 shows the progress countries have made on their commitments in this regard (data collection: 2021).

Table 7.4: Climate change mitigation: Central African countries' response

No.	Country	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) (documents submitted to the UNFCCC)	REDD+ (four documents and date) https://redd.unfccc.int/fact-sheets/forest-reference-emission-levels.html (countries that have submitted a forest reference (emission) level (FREL))				Communication strategy and plan	Comments
			National strategy or action plan, year submitted	NFM inc. monitoring, reporting and verification	FREL/FRL year	Safeguards information system (SIS)		
1	Burundi		2019					
2	Cameroon	8 June 2010 ^a	2018	2014	2018	2020	2016	National reference emissions level to be established. Not yet submitted to the UNFCCC https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/copenhagen_accord/application/pdf/cameroon_cphaccordapp2.pdf
3	Republic of the Congo	3 February 2010 ^b	2018	2016	2016		2013	http://cog.registreredd.org/outils-REDD/SIS-Redd?l=fr https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/copenhagen_accord/application/pdf/congocphaccord.pdf

Continued on next page

Table 7.4 : Continued

No.	Country	Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) (documents submitted to the UNFCCC)	REDD+ (four documents and date) https://redd.unfccc.int/fact-sheets/forest-reference-emission-levels.html (countries that have submitted a forest reference (emission) level (FREL))				Communication strategy and plan	Comments
			National strategy or action plan, year submitted	NFM inc. monitoring, reporting and verification	FREL/ FRL year	Safeguards information system (SIS)		
4	Gabon	24 February 2010 ^c			2021	2021		https://redd.unfccc.int/submissions.html?country=gab FREL/FRL under review by the UNFCCC assessment team https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/copenhagen_accord/application/pdf/gaboncpaccord_app2.pdf
5	Equatorial Guinea		2020		2020			
6	CAR ^d	1 March 2010		2014				https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/copenhagen_accord/application/pdf/centralafricanrepublic_cphaccord_app2.pdf
7	DRC	30 January 2010 (Copenhagen Accord declaration)	2012	2019	January 2018		2013	http://www.rdc-snsf.org/
8	Rwanda	2012						https://unfccc.int/documents?f%5B0%5D=country%3A1436
9	Sao Tome and Principe							In progress http://www.fao.org/3/a-ax427f.pdf
10	Chad	25 August 2010 ^e						https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/copenhagen_accord/application/pdf/chadcpaccord_app2.pdf

a https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/copenhagen_accord/application/pdf/cameroon_cphaccordapp2.pdf

b https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/copenhagen_accord/application/pdf/congocphaccord.pdf

c https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/copenhagen_accord/application/pdf/gaboncpaccord_app2.pdf

d https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/copenhagen_accord/application/pdf/centralafricanrepublic_cphaccord_app2.pdf

e https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/copenhagen_accord/application/pdf/chadcpaccord_app2.pdf

In short, countries are at different stages of submitting documents on their emissions reductions. Even those forested countries that are ‘undertaking’ the REDD+ process are not up to date with the documentation they need to submit to the UNFCCC Secretariat. The COMIFAC PREREDD 2 project should help all countries in the subregion fulfil the requirements of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+. This project is being developed by COMIFAC for submission to the Green Climate Fund with the support of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) and UNDP.

Commitments related to both adaptation and mitigation

Green Climate Fund (GCF) commitments

The GCF is a global fund designed to help developing countries reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and increase their capacity to respond to climate change. It was set up by the UNFCCC in 2010. It focuses on the needs of countries that are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, in particular LDCs, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and African countries. Five Central African countries have submitted their projects to the GCF; the other five are still at the project preparation stage (see Table 7.5).

Table 7.5: Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) policy documents within the framework of the UNFCCC: Status of Central African countries’ submissions, December 2020

No.	Country	GCF			CTCN		
		Number of projects	Total GCF funding (USD million)	Number of preparation activities	Number of requests for technical assistance	Grant amount (USD)	Amount transferred (USD)
1	Burundi	1	9.1	1	2	50,000	-
						50,000	
2	Cameroon	3	25.5	4	1	9,982,000	-
3	Republic of the Congo	1	29	1	-	-	-
4	Gabon	2	-	5	-	-	-
5	Equatorial Guinea	-	-	3	-	-	-
6	CAR	-	-	2	-	-	-
7	DRC	2	21.0	5	1	9,999,909	1,996,677
8	Rwanda	3	45.3	4	2	25,000	9,969,619
						9,969,619	
9	Sao Tome and Principe	-	-	2	-	-	-
10	Chad	1	7.3	3	1	47,449	-
	Total						

Source: <https://www.ctc-n.org/> www.ctc-n.org (accessed 2 March 2022)

Cameroon and Rwanda have the most projects, more than DRC, Burundi and Chad, and far more funding has been allocated to Rwanda than Cameroon and DRC. All countries are actively engaging in preparatory activities. Cameroon and Rwanda have the same number of GCF activities, followed by Gabon and DRC, while Burundi and Rwanda rank first ahead of Cameroon, DRC and Chad for the number of requests for technical assistance (CTCN). Three countries in the subregion must make a concerted effort to catch up: Equatorial Guinea, CAR and Sao Tome and Principe.

Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) commitments

The CTCN is mandated by the UNFCCC to assist developing country Parties and to disseminate environmentally sound technologies. These technologies should help address climate-related challenges, and promote low-carbon and climate-resilient development. Countries must nominate a Designated National Entity (DNE) that will be responsible for preparing requests for climate technology-related technical assistance for submission to the CTCN. COMIFAC has supported all Central African countries to nominate their DNEs and four countries in the subregion to prepare their Technology Needs Assessments (TNAs). COMIFAC, in partnership with the CTCN, organized an awareness-raising workshop in Douala on in September 2019 on the opportunities that the CTCN offers to private sector actors and development banks in West and Central Africa.

The countries mentioned above (see Table 7.5) also submitted projects to the CTCN requesting grant funding for their planned activities. Only Rwanda has received the full grant expected for one of its activities, while DRC has so far received only around 20 percent of the expected grant for its project activity. In the whole subregion, only Rwanda and Burundi have two activities. Rwanda provides technical assistance for gender studies and is also engaged in reducing climate change-related vulnerability in the north-west of the country through community-based adaptation efforts. Burundi and Chad are prioritizing South-South cooperation, while Cameroon is seeking to increase the resilience of local communities to climate change through youth entrepreneurship and the integrated management of natural resources. DRC, on the other hand, plans to strengthen the adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities living in the Congo Basin.

Table 7.6: Number of lead authors of the sixth IPCC assessment cycle reports (AR6): Status of Central African countries

IPCC reports	Africa	Congo Basin		All report authors
		Men	Women	
Working Group 1	20	1	0	235
Working Group 2	33	0	0	327
Working Group 3	32	0	0	235
Global warming of 1.5°C	12	1	0	91
Climate change and land	18	3	0	107
Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate	5	0	0	103
Total*		4	0	743**

*The total is not necessarily the sum of the rows, as several authors have contributed to several IPCC reports.

**For the Sixth Assessment Report, 743 experts were selected as coordinating lead authors, lead authors or reviewers out of the 2,827 individuals put forward. The number of authors may increase or decrease slightly during an assessment due, for example, to the addition of an author with complementary expertise or to the resignation of another for health reasons or due to unavailability (https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2021/07/AR6_FS_select.pdf, accessed 15 February 2022)

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) commitments

The IPCC is an intergovernmental body established in 1988 to advance global scientific, technical and socioeconomic knowledge on climate change, its causes and potential impacts, and strategies for combating it. The IPCC began its sixth assessment cycle in 2016. Countries are invited to nominate an IPCC Focal Point and make their network of scientists and experts available to the assessment process (drafting, reviewing and validation). Few experts from the Congo Basin have been nominated and appointed to IPCC reporting teams. Indeed, only four experts from the region are included in the sixth IPCC assessment cycle (see Table 7.6), none of whom are women.

7.2 Voluntary commitments or participation in related structural initiatives

7.2.1 Forest Carbon Partnership Facility

Launched in 2008, the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) is a global partnership of governments, businesses, civil society and indigenous peoples' organizations centred around REDD+¹. This initiative enables countries to effectively coordinate their REDD+ activities. The FCPF works with 47 developing countries: 18 from Africa, 11 from Asia and 18 from Latin America and the Caribbean. It supports the REDD+ process through two separate, but complementary, funds:²

- The FCPF Readiness Fund, which helps countries lay the foundations for the implementation of REDD+;
- The FCPF Carbon Fund, which is piloting performance-based payments. These payments are made to countries that are working to prepare for and implement REDD+, and that have achieved verifiable emissions reductions in their forestry sector and more broadly in relation to land use.

In Central Africa, of the ten COMIFAC Member States, five have fully committed to the Readiness Fund process and three have progressed further to engage with the Carbon Fund (see Table 7.7). Both Cameroon and the Republic of the Congo have expressed their intention to receive payments from the Carbon Fund for measurable emissions reductions in the forestry and other land-intensive sectors. This follows the submission of their Emission Reductions Program Idea Note (ER-PIN). The Republic of the Congo has made more progress than Cameroon, given that it has submitted its ERPD. In addition to submitting its Letter of Intent, DRC has signed an ERPA. Countries have mobilized financial resources for the initiative at different levels and at different times. However, despite these differences, they have a common interest in completing their REDD+ preparations and reaping the benefits of carbon emissions reductions and non-carbon benefits through performance-based payments.

1 <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org>

2 <https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org>

Table 7.7: FCPF commitments: Status of Central African countries

No.	Country	Readiness Plan Idea Note (R-PIN)	Readiness Preparation Plan (R-PP)	Strategy	Emission Reductions Payment Agreements (ERPA) Area, tCO ₂ and expected amount	Total grants received for preparation (USD)	Comments
1	Burundi*	-	Yes	-	-	-	-
2	Cameroon	Yes	Yes	Yes	2019 Area: 9.34 million ha Carbon: 11,949,000 tCO ₂	2010: USD 200,000 2012: USD 3,600,000 for strategy preparation	Letter of Intent signed in 2016 and preparation of an Emission Reductions Program Document (ERPD) planned with USD 650,000 of assistance
3	Republic of the Congo	Yes	Yes	Yes	2018 Area: 12.35 million ha Carbon: 11,700,000 tCO ₂	2009: USD 200,000 2012: USD 3,400,000 2015: USD 5,200,000	Letter of Intent signed, ERPD drawn up with USD 650,000 of assistance and ERPD contract signed for the Sangha and Likouala area Tranche A: USD 41,795,000 Tranche B: USD 42,795,000 Each tranche generates 8,359,000 certified emissions reduction (CER) credits
4	Gabon	Yes	Yes	No	Area: 15.09 million ha	2019: USD 1,946,122.50	Gabon is currently the last Central African country to engage in the REDD+ process. Revised R-PP submitted to FCPF and preparation of ERPA in progress (R-PP Gabon, July 2017)
5	Equatorial Guinea*	-	Yes	Yes	-	-	-
6	CAR	Yes	Yes	No	-0	2017: USD 3,600,000	The development of the REDD+ strategy is under way
7	DRC	Yes	Yes	Yes	2018 Area: 12.8 million ha Carbon: 10,000,000 tCO ₂	2009: USD 200,000 2010: USD 3,400,000 2012: USD 200,000	DRC received USD 650,000 of assistance for the preparation of its ERPD. ERPD signed. The emissions reductions programme only covers the province of Mai-Ndombe. 5 million received from additional FCPF funds
8	Rwanda*	-	Yes	-	-	-	-
9	Sao Tome and Principe*	-	Yes	-	-	-	-
10	Chad*	-	Yes	-	-	-	-

* Countries that have not committed to the FCPF initiative.

Source: <https://forestcarbonpartnership.org/countries>

7.2.2 UN-REDD

The UN-REDD Programme is the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. It supports national REDD+ processes and promotes the informed and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and forest-dependent communities, in the implementation of REDD+³. It was launched in 2008 and benefits from the technical expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

In Central Africa, seven countries (Cameroon, CAR, Chad, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo) have signed up to this partnership process and some have received targeted support (see Table 7.8).

Table 7.8: UN-REDD commitments: Status of Central African countries

No.	Country	Type of support	Amount (USD)	Expected country commitments	Comments
1	Burundi	-	-	-	
2	Cameroon	National capacity-building on stakeholder participation in forest governance – FLEGT interface, REDD+	35,800	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness-raising among relevant stakeholders on the links between REDD+ and FLEGT and encouraging them to coordinate the processes; Facilitating regular information sharing between the REDD+ and FLEGT processes and stakeholders. 	
3	Republic of the Congo	Programme to support the REDD+ process in the Republic of the Congo	4,000,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The national REDD+ process is well managed and fully participatory. The country is ready for the implementation of REDD+ structural and investment reforms, with safeguards taken into account. A comprehensive REDD+ information and monitoring system is operational. 	Funding for 2012–2015
4	Gabon	-	-	-	Member in October 2010
5	Equatorial Guinea	-	-	-	Joined in May 2014
6	CAR	Support for the REDD+ preparation plan (R-PP)	-	-	Joined in August 2010. Request rejected due to lack of funding

Continued on the next page

³ <https://www.unredd.net/about/un-redd-programme.html>

Table 7.8: continued

No.	Country	Type of support	Amount (USD)	Expected country commitments	Comments
7	DRC	UN-REDD support for the REDD+ preparation plan (R-PP)	7,383,200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A national strategy under the REDD+ mechanism is being prepared for 2030 with the participation of stakeholders and is ready to launch. • A draft institutional framework for the implementation of REDD+ was drawn up for 2013. • A comprehensive monitoring, reporting and verification system developed under REDD+ is operational. 	Financial support in 2009, in partnership with UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
		Support for the development, establishment and submission of a forest reference emissions level (FREL) in the DRC	335,354	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of forest: clarifying certain elements of the definition; • Scale: determining which regions will be part of the FREL, based on certain technical and institutional selection criteria; • Scope: (i) including deforestation-related activities; (ii) submitting a conservative estimate of historical emissions from activities related to forest degradation; • Data: centralizing and standardizing activity data and emissions factors; • Approach: studying historical emissions and identifying possible trends; • Adjustment: calculating an adjustment that takes account of certain factors like expected population growth, accessibility and territorial development plans; • Submitting the FREL at COP21. 	Financial support obtained in 2015
8	Rwanda	-	-	-	
9	Sao Tome and Principe	-	-	-	
10	Chad	Establishing a Safeguards Information System (SIS)	60,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the activities/work streams needed to develop a tailored approach for Chad that will guarantee REDD+ activities; • Improving understanding of the risks and benefits of REDD+. 	
	Total		11,814,354		

Source: <https://www.un-redd.org/our-work/partners-countries>

More generally, UN-REDD has helped several countries implement REDD+-related activities: FLEGT in Cameroon; a national forest monitoring system (FMS) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 in the Republic of the Congo; an R-PP in CAR; a REDD+ strategy/action plan and FMS in DRC; and an SIS in Chad. The range of activities carried out in the different countries illustrates the importance of this initiative for Central African countries.

7.2.3 Central African Forest Initiative

Launched in 2015 via a Joint Declaration,⁴ the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI)⁵ is a collaborative partnership that brings together six Central African countries with high forest cover (DRC, Gabon, CAR, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of the Congo) and a range of donors (Germany, France, the Netherlands, Norway, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the European Union). CAFI works to place Central African forests at the heart of the global climate agenda, supporting strategic and holistic national investments that reconcile forest conservation with low-emissions economic and human development. It aims to recognize and protect the contribution the region's forests can make to mitigating climate change, reducing poverty and supporting sustainable development.

CAFI is a unique initiative that drives high-level political dialogue and increased funding to support ambitious reforms and activities on the ground.⁶ These activities are implemented through a steering mechanism designed to mediate intersectoral decision-making within the framework of a country's vision for development.⁷ To participate, partner countries are invited to develop National Investment Frameworks (NIFs) that address all the causes of deforestation and forest degradation, and to propose an ambitious multi-sectoral theory of change, aligned with their development objectives.

Letters of Intent, which take the place of agreements between CAFI and partner countries, set out ambitious commitments on priority strategic issues, such as sustainable land management, strengthening land tenure arrangements, redirecting agriculture towards savannah areas, forest management, reducing unsustainable fuelwood consumption, and participatory and transparent governance of the mining and hydrocarbon sectors.

To date, three Letters of Intent have been signed with DRC, Gabon and the Republic of the Congo and USD 465 million has been pledged for these three countries (see Table 7.9). Preparatory grants have also been allocated to Cameroon, CAR and Equatorial Guinea to help them draw up their National Investment Frameworks.

CAFI also seeks to support countries through results-based payment mechanisms. An unprecedented agreement on payments for forest preservation in Gabon, amounting to USD 150 million, was reached at the UN Climate Action Summit in 2019. It aims to stimulate and reward the achievement of the country's ambitions.

4 www.cafi.org/content/cafi/fr/home/our-work/how-we-work/the-cafi-declaration.html

5 www.cafi.org

6 <https://www.cafi.org/content/cafi/en/home/our-work/our-portfolio.html>

7 The Heads of State and Government of the partner countries, such as President Tshisekedi of the DRC or Prime Minister Mouamba of the Republic of the Congo, have personally committed to make the partnerships a success, assuring their international partners that they are determined to achieve the results promised (www.cafi.org/content/cafi/en/home/events/side-events/takeaway-from-the-climate-action-summit.html).

Table 7.9: CAFI commitments: Status of Central African countries

Country	Current situation	Expected amount (USD million)	Net amount financed (USD million) ^a
DRC	Letter of Intent (LoI) signed in April 2016 for 2016–2020 Implementation of a portfolio of 16 programmes Discussions on the continuation of the partnership post-2021 under way	220 190 (LoI, 2016) + 30 additional	152
Gabon	LoI signed in June 2017 for 2017–2021 Implementation of three programmes (one approved in 2018 and two approved in 2020) Amendment to the LoI signed in 2019 covering a results-based payment partnership for 2016–2025	180 30 (LoI, 2017) + 150 (results-based payments, addendum to the LoI, 2019)	14.4
Republic of the Congo	LoI signed in September 2019 for 2019–2025 Programming framework adopted in January 2020 and investment framework decision adopted in October 2020 Nine programmes under preparation	65 45 (CAFI funds, LoI 2019) + 20 (parallel funding)	1
CAR	National investment framework drawn up for 2020–2025 Programme to support the development of the LoI under way	Not applicable	1
Equatorial Guinea	National investment framework drawn up for 2020–2030	Not applicable	1.2
Cameroon	Finalization of the national investment framework under way	Not applicable	0.6

Source: <https://www.cafi.org/what-we-do/countries-and-topics>

a Net amount funded by the CAFI trust fund as at September 2020 (source: <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/afi00>)

7.3 Other climate change-related commitments

7.3.1 Convention on Biological Diversity and Convention to Combat Desertification

Beyond their commitments directly related to combating climate change, Central African countries have mobilized under the other two Rio Conventions – the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) – enabling them to link up and strengthen their climate initiatives.

Efforts made under the Burundi National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) to preserve protected forest areas, for example, contribute to maintaining forest carbon stocks. This is beneficial to the local climate and supports both mitigation and adaptation efforts (REDD+). Several Central African countries have made efforts to maintain the natural landscape of a proportion of their territory. Similar to reforestation efforts, initiatives to restore degraded areas in desert zones to combat desertification contribute to both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

7.3.2 AFR100

Only seven COMIFAC countries have signed up to the AFR100 landscape restoration movement (see Table 7.10). Rwanda and Burundi are working to restore more than 70 percent of their territory, Cameroon a quarter, and CAR, Chad, DRC and the Republic of the Congo less than 10 percent. Countries do tend to recognize the link between this commitment and early commitments on climate and the management of natural resources. Actions taken on climate change adaptation and/or mitigation are usually included among countries' commitments.

Table 7.10: Central African countries' commitments under the AFR100 process and links with other commitments (including climate-related commitments)

No.	Country	Commitments		Alignment with national objectives
		in millions of ha	Percentage of country area	
1	Burundi	2	72 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vision Burundi 2025 - Burundi National Strategy and Action Plan for Land Degradation Control - Burundi National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) - Burundi National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan - Burundi National Agriculture Strategy - National Strategy and Action Plan for reduction of disaster risks and management of disasters - National Forest Landscape Restoration Programme - National REDD+ Strategy and intended NDC of Burundi - National Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan
2	Cameroon	12	25 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cameroon's forest landscape restoration process is linked to Cameroon's commitment to the 2030 Agenda (SDGs) and the three Rio Conventions (UNFCCC, CBD, UNCCD). - Successful restoration in Cameroon's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) would aim to reduce greenhouse emissions to mitigate and adapt to climate change. - Restoration and reforestation were key areas identified in Cameroon's development strategy to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) - The Government of Cameroon is involved in the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) process and is defining LDN targets - Through the signature and national validation of the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), Cameroon has committed to combating illegal logging and to the sustainable management of forestry concessions through management plans (including restoration activities) - Several national plans and strategies aim to restore degraded land and forests, such as the National Plantation Strategy, the National Plan to Combat Desertification and the National Emergency Plan to Combat Deforestation and Forest Degradation - The cross-sectoral, multi-stakeholder land-use planning process has been identified as a promising approach to the coordination of various land-related political interests.

Continued on the next page

Table 7.10: continued

No.	Country	Commitments		Alignment with national objectives
		in millions of ha	Percentage of country area	
3	Republic of the Congo	2	6 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alignment with COMIFAC Convergence Plan on sustainable forest management, protection, resilience and achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets/CBD - Alignment with the affordable energy strategy - Alignment with the National REDD+ Strategy and climate response mechanisms
4	CAR	3.5	6 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International commitments on climate and sustainable development - Intended NDC targets under the UNFCCC, focusing mainly on land-use change and forestry and to a lesser extent on agricultural and energy development
5	DRC	8	3 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International commitments on climate and sustainable development - National programme on the environment, forests, water and biodiversity (PNEFEB-2) formulated in 2011, which constitutes the guiding strategic document on natural resource management - CAFI under which it aims to reduce the loss of forest cover from the current 300,000 ha/year to 200,000 ha/year by 2020 - Four programmes will focus on the key reforms needed in the areas of land-use planning and a national land-use plan - A tenure policy to better secure tenure in the rural sector - Investments will enhance existing actions at the provincial and territorial level in high-deforestation REDD+ areas (Orientale province and Sud Ubangui province) where local communities and territorial entities will be supported to sustainably manage and use resources
6	Rwanda	2	76 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Widespread implementation of landscape restoration would contribute to Rwanda's Vision 2020, its Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Ministry of Natural Resources' results-based management initiative, its District Development Plan, and its District Forest Management targets. Forest landscape restoration would also contribute to the NDC and multiple SDGs, including monitoring and reporting for SDG target 15.3 on land degradation and indirectly to SDGs 1 and 2 on poverty and food security.
7	Chad	1.4	1 %	Chad's restoration target contributes to the following initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vision 2030 Strategy: "The Chad that We Want" (Vision 2030) - Restoration and rehabilitation of ecosystems around Lake Chad covering 4,000 ha - National Action Program to Combat Desertification (PAN/LCD) and land degradation neutrality target - National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (SNPA/DB) - Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) - Great Green Wall initiative and 3 million ha target
	Total	30.9	6 %	

7.3.3 United Nations Forum on Forests

Efforts to manage forests sustainably within the framework of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), established in 2000, take account of the three Rio Conventions (CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC). These efforts also work to combat climate change. Countries are currently being invited to submit voluntary reports on their progress towards the goals and targets set out under the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests (2017–2030). These goals and targets relate to different aspects of sustainable forest management. For example, Central African countries efforts as part of the REDD+ process are supported by Global Forest Goal 1 (“Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change.”) and targets 1.1 (“Forest area is increased by 3 percent worldwide.”), 1.2 (“The world’s forest carbon stocks are maintained or enhanced.”), 1.3 (“By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally.”) and 1.4 (“The resilience and adaptive capacity of all types of forests to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change is significantly strengthened worldwide.”).

As at June 2020, no Central African countries have submitted a report to UNFF on their forest commitments for 2017–2030.

7.3.4 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Some of the commitments made by Central African countries under the SDGs will work to combat climate change. SDG 13 is to “take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”. A careful review of the indicators under all the SDGs can, however, provide useful information about how a country is responding to climate change.

The most illustrative indicators are: SDG 9.4.1: CO₂ emissions per unit of value added; 9.5.2 Researchers (in full-time equivalent) per million inhabitants; 13.1.1 Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population; 14.5.1 Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas; 15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area; 15.1.2 Proportion of important sites for terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity that are covered by protected areas, by ecosystem type; 15.3.1 Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area. These indicators show just how many climate change initiatives are linked to development efforts.

Countries can, therefore, implement measures that enable them to meet their development needs, while at the same time avoiding, reducing or absorbing greenhouse gas emissions and building climate resilience.

7.3.5 FLEGT VPAs (progress and link with forest protection)

Forest degradation, largely caused by timber harvesting (legal and illegal), has been shown to be an important contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions (Pearson et al. 2017). In the Congo Basin, timber harvesting takes a diversity of forms ranging from multinational companies operating in multiple forest concessions to individual or small-scale chainsaw logging enterprises operating “informally” (Carodenuto and Cerutti 2014). Although Congo Basin countries have sound

legal frameworks based on principles of sustainable forest management, the limited regulatory governance capacity of both state and non-state actors has resulted in widespread illegalities in the forest sector. The problem of illegal logging was considered so severe that the European Union introduced the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan in 2003 with the aim to harness the power of its timber-consuming markets as an incentive for timber-exporting countries to enforce their own rules and eliminate illegal forest activities within their territories. Through FLEGT, the EU requests Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) with its timber trading partners whereby both parties outline how capacity will be reinforced and forest governance improved to promote and eventually assure legality compliance across the forest sector. From a global perspective, the Congo Basin has a high number of VPAs, with six countries in different phases of VPA negotiation and implementation (see Table 7.11).⁸

Although the FLEGT Action Plan does not cite climate change as a main objective, the efforts to better regulate unsustainable and illegal logging in Central African countries have significant potential to contribute to climate adaptation and mitigation. This is because the FLEGT approach recognizes the importance of improving governance, which is critical for mitigating climate change through forest sector interventions (Dooley and Ozinga 2011; Levin et al. 2008). More specifically, adherence to legal requirements such as forest management plans has been shown to reduce carbon emissions from forest operations (Cerutti et al. 2017). The full potential of a FLEGT approach to mitigate climate change has not been realized, however, due to the ineffective implementation of VPAs in most of the countries concerned. Based on a recent meta-analysis of institutional capacities of VPA countries, most Central African countries have significant capacity gaps and limited political will to effectively regulate illegal logging through their VPAs, although the Republic of Congo has achieved noticeable progress in information transparency and multi-stakeholder participation (Adams et al. 2020). The central way in which FLEGT-VPAs aim to fight illegalities in the forest sector is through the development of timber traceability and legality assurance systems (TLAS). Although the Agreements include additional mechanisms such as independent forest monitoring,

Table 7.11: FLEGT VPA: Status of Central African countries

Country	Phase			
	1: Information and pre-negotiation phase (period)	2: Formal negotiation	3: Development of traceability system	4: FLEGT licence issued
Cameroon			X	
Republic of the Congo			X	
Gabon		X		
Equatorial Guinea*	X			
Central African Republic (CAR)			X	
DRC		X		

* Note: After a FLEGT workshop in 2016, the VPA process seems to have completely stalled in Equatorial Guinea, as in most countries in the Congo Basin.

⁸ According to data from the European Forest Institute (EFI) FLEGT programme (<https://www.euflegt.efi.int/home>), a total of 16 countries are involved in a VPA process. NB: Equatorial Guinea is not on the EFI list and progress seems to have completely stalled there.

they have attracted less attention as compared to the funding and development focus on the design and operationalization of TLAS guarantee systems. However, these systems have proven difficult to operationalize in practice, and no country has been successful in delivering a FLEGT legality certificate to demonstrate compliance with the EU Timber Regulation. For example, Cameroon's VPA traceability system (SIGIF) has never been operational beyond a pilot phase and the whole system has been in « deadlock » since 2018 (CIFOR 2020; EFI 2018).

As we approach the 20-year anniversary of the EU FLEGT Action Plan, it is important to take stock and assess lessons learned, as the European Union is considering a similar approach for regulating deforestation in agriculture supply chains, such as cocoa or palm oil. Although VPAs are lauded for their contribution to improved transparency and stakeholder participation (Hoare et al. 2020), there are serious concerns that the FLEGT-VPA approach in the Congo Basin is leading to power consolidation amongst the already dominant and internationally-financed logging industry while further marginalizing the most vulnerable segments of the sector: the smaller logging companies marketing their products domestically (Carodenuto and Cerutti 2014). More attention should be placed on the critical question of how best to distribute legal access to the last remaining forest resources in the region and which segment of the sector should be prioritized for forest-based economic development and poverty reduction.

7.3.6 Forest Investment Programme

The Forest Investment Programme (FIP), initiated by the World Bank, is one of three climate programmes and trust funds grouped under the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) banner. This programme aims to provide pre-financing for the implementation of REDD+ readiness reforms and other activities that seek to influence forest policies in developing countries. Countries embarking on this process must produce forest investment plans that target priority investment areas with a view to curbing deforestation. Donor-funded projects are then developed for the priority areas identified. Table 7.12 shows the implementation status of the plans and related efforts in Central Africa.

In total, only four countries have produced their forest investment plans: Cameroon, DRC, the Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The World Bank approved USD 232 million for the development of these plans.⁹ Additional funding has been requested from the World Bank, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and other bilateral (AFD, GCF) and multilateral (EU) partners. Cameroon and Rwanda pledged to contribute 7.61 percent and 10.21 percent, respectively, reflecting a clear commitment by both countries. Conversely, DRC and the Republic of the Congo have not made any financial commitments. The remaining Central African countries have not produced forest investment plans (60 percent). Very few countries in the Congo Basin have the capacity to complete this process without the support of external experts (Sufo Kankeu 2019). The countries' differing levels of commitment reflect the different positions taken by politicians and civil society (Sufo Kankeu 2019).

⁹ <https://climatefundsupdate.org/data-dashboard/regions/>

Table 7.12: Forest Investment Programme (FIP): Status of Central African countries

No.	Country	Year	Number of projects implemented	Description of projects/programmes + total budget	Funding
1	Burundi				
2	Cameroon	2017	3 projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - P1. Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation on the southern plateau of Cameroon (USD 130,177 million) - P2. Climate change resilience and adaptation in northern forested areas (USD 115 million) - P3. Watershed management in the western uplands (USD 70 million) 	USD 315,177 million of which USD 24 million from the Government of Cameroon
3	Republic of the Congo	2018	2 projects	<p>P1- Project to support the establishment of agroforestry plantations in north Congo (USD 11 million)</p> <p>P2- Community agroforestry and fuelwood programme in the departments of Pool and Plateaux (USD 8 million)</p>	USD 24 million
Or P4	Gabon				
5	Equatorial Guinea				
6	CAR				
7	DRC	2011	5 projects	<p>P1- Kinshasa supply basin programme (USD 13.7 million)</p> <p>P2- Karanga and Mbuji-Mayi supply basin programme (USD 11.7 million)</p> <p>P3- Kisangani supply basin programme (USD 99.8 million)</p> <p>P4- Programme for private sector engagement in REDD+ (USD 5.05 million)</p> <p>P5- Small grants programme in support of innovative and high co-benefit initiatives (USD 18.15 million)</p>	USD 60 million No government contribution
8	Rwanda	2017	3 projets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of agroforestry and sustainable agriculture (USD 60 million) - Sustainable management of forests and landscapes (USD 21.5 million) - Wood supply chain, improved efficiency and added value (USD 12.5 million) 	USD 94 million of which 9.6 million from the Government of Rwanda
9	Sao Tome and Principe				
10	Chad				
	Total				USD 493 million

Source: GoR (2017), GoC (2017), GOC (2018), GoRDC (2011)^a

a GoC: Government of Cameroon, GoR: Government of Rwanda, GoRDC: Government of DRC, GOC: Government of the Republic of the Congo

7.3.7 Congo Basin Forest Fund

The Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF) is a multi-donor fund created in 2008 and managed by AfDB. A total of EUR 123 million in funding was provided by the United Kingdom, Norway and Canada.¹⁰ Activities are mainly implemented in Central Africa (see Table 7.13). The CBFF seeks to work with a wide range of development partners and its main objective is to “*alleviate poverty and mitigate climate change by reducing the rate of deforestation in the Congo Basin through sustainable forest management*”. The 2018 assessment found that, while the overall performance of the CBFF was satisfactory, projects were not implemented effectively and yielded results that are unlikely to be sustainable, particularly in the absence of complementary funding.

Table 7.13. Congo Basin Forest Fund (CBFF) commitments: Status of Central African countries

No.	Country	Last document submitted	Amount received (EUR millions)	Target period	Comments	Number of national projects	Number of multinational projects
1	Burundi		0.12	2009-2014		1	3
2	Cameroon		4.18	2009-2015		9	8
3	Republic of the Congo		1.92	2009-2016		1	7
4	Gabon		4.11	2009-2015		1	6
5	Equatorial Guinea		0.51	2009-2016		1	3
6	CAR		0.21	2012		2	6
7	DRC		22.79	2009-2017		13	5
8	Rwanda		4.35	2009-2017		1	3
9	Sao Tome and Principe		-	-		0	1
10	Chad		-	-		0	3
	Total					29	45

Source: GoR (2017), GoC (2017), GOC (2018), GoRDC (2011), <https://cbff.afdb.org/fr/pays-partenaires>, <https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Policy-Documents/Congo%20Basin%20Forest%20Fund%20-%20Operational%20Procedures%20FR.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.afdb.org/fr/topics-and-sectors/initiatives-partnerships/congo-basin-forest-fund/topics-and-sectors/initiatives-partnerships/congo-basin-forest-fund/climate-change>

7.3.8 Initiatives of High Forest, Low Deforestation countries

Da Fonseca, Rodriguez et al. (2007) define High Forest, Low Deforestation (HFLD) countries as those with forest cover above 50 percent in 2015 and an annual deforestation rate below the world average of 0.22 percent over the 1990–2000 emissions period. This classification was originally developed to identify which countries could potentially qualify for REDD+ and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). This definition, which was used at that time (2007), crystallized the debate on the subject and excluded countries that did not meet these criteria. It divides forested developing countries into four quadrants: countries with low forest cover and high deforestation (LFHD); countries with low forest cover and low deforestation (LFLD); countries with high forest cover and high deforestation (HFHD) and countries with high forest cover and low deforestation (HFLD). The last group, HFLD countries, is of particular interest to many donors, who are now focusing on how to prevent deforestation. Megevand et al (2013) put all countries in the Congo Basin in the HFLD category. However, the literature and the dynamics of Central African countries show that very few can really claim to belong to this category, because the rate of deforestation in these countries is still fairly high. Considering the categorization used by Da Fonseca, Rodriguez et al. (2007), we find differences between countries in terms of forest policies, deforestation rates and forest cover, as shown in Table 7.14.

With the advent of REDD+ and the new definitions of forest adopted over the last decade, most countries in the Congo Basin still fit the profile of HFLD countries. Nevertheless, there are clear signs that these forests are under increasing threat. Indeed, these countries are now in a precarious position due to growing pressure from different sources, including: mining, road development, agrifood and biofuels, in addition to expanding subsistence agriculture and charcoal collection (Megevand et al. 2013).

Gabon was the first Central African country to be admitted to the HFLD group. It is also the first HFLD country to sign a Letter of Intent with CAFI for results-based payments for reduced emissions, amounting to USD 150 million.

Table 7.14: High Forest, Low Deforestation (HFLD): Status of Central African countries

No.	Country	Forest cover	Deforestation rate	Category
1	Burundi	16.8%	9%	LFHD
2	Cameroon	66%	0.16%	HFLD
3	Republic of the Congo	65.52%	0.1%	HFLD
4	Gabon	89.3%	0.05%	HFLD
5	Equatorial Guinea	93%	0.3%	HFLD
6	CAR	45.6%	0.26%	HFHD
7	DRC	67%	0.20%	HFLD
8	Rwanda	29.8%	0.02%	LFLD
9	Sao Tome and Principe	9.8%	1.6%	LFHD
10	Chad	11.1%	1.55%	LFHD

Source: <https://www.fern.org/>, <https://www.cafi.org/what-we-do/countries-and-topics>, <https://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/en/>

However, given the significant controversy over recent years regarding the redefinition of ‘forests’, most Central African countries have chosen to use the default definition provided by FAO. They have done so because, for them, it is important to show that forests cover over 50 percent of their territory and because some donors have set up specific programmes that these countries can benefit from. A case in point: Rwanda is in the LFLD quadrant and Cameroon in the HFHD quadrant, yet both countries’ governments claim that they are HFLD countries under the new definition of forest.

7.3.9 The Ramsar Convention and peatland-related trends

The recent discovery/rediscovery of peatlands along the border between DRC and the Republic of the Congo has highlighted the important role played by specific wetland ecosystems as carbon sinks (see Chapter 9 on Peatlands). Mangroves are also known to store significant amounts of carbon, mainly in the soil. The different carbon reservoirs in these wetland ecosystems need to be conserved and/or sustainably managed, as part of both adaptation and mitigation efforts. Properly managing these wetlands offers a nature-based solution and the valuation of these ecosystems and their biodiversity is regularly highlighted as one of the best ways to combat climate change. At the international level, the Ramsar (or Wetlands) Convention governs wetland ecosystem management. All ten COMIFAC countries have signed up to this convention. Two countries, DRC and the Republic of the Congo, have joined the International Tropical Peatland Center, so they can benefit from the experience of other tropical countries with peatlands.

7.4 Other trends with the potential to impact countries’ UNFCCC commitments

7.4.1 Reducing or eliminating deforestation in private sector value chains

Many companies, mainly timber and agrifood multinationals, source their raw materials from Central Africa. To reduce their carbon footprint, these industries are working to ensure that their value chains stop contributing to the destruction of the environment, and of forests in particular. Other than timber, the moist forest-based sectors most affected are cacao and rubber. Given their willingness to act, the issue then becomes what type of responses countries should put in place with regard to their climate commitments.

In Central Africa, the private sector has barely engaged with the REDD+ process, the main mechanism for coordinating the fight against deforestation as part of countries’ response to climate change. On the other hand, cocoa companies have begun to participate in certification processes, albeit gradually. These processes are not, however, specifically concerned with the sector’s carbon footprint. Moreover, production in this sector tends to be the remit of small farmers. In Cameroon, IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative- and WWF-led initiatives have been launched.

It may be possible to optimize Central African countries’ commitments under the REDD+ process by taking proactive steps to harness this private sector commitment.

7.4.2 Reducing or eliminating imported deforestation

Many Western countries are trying to reduce their carbon footprint. To this end, the EU and European countries are working to reduce imported deforestation and are making some progress. Deforestation has, therefore, become a cross-border issue and Central African countries need to decide how to manage the requirements placed on their timber and agricultural product exports.

These requirements relate mainly to REDD+ and the arrangements for coordinating between countries, the private sector and various other stakeholders must still be defined to meet these new requirements.

So far, there has been little response from countries in the region on this issue.

Conclusions

The principle of common but differentiated responsibility has enabled Central African countries, which have low greenhouse gas emissions in comparison with other countries, to sustainably manage their forest resources as a way to support international efforts to limit climate change. However, their ambitions do not necessarily translate into commitments that are effectively implemented at the national level and that would enable them to better fulfil their obligations under the UNFCCC. While international funding is available to developing countries, including those in Central Africa, these countries' failure to submit the required national documentation at the international level means their access to certain funding is severely curtailed.