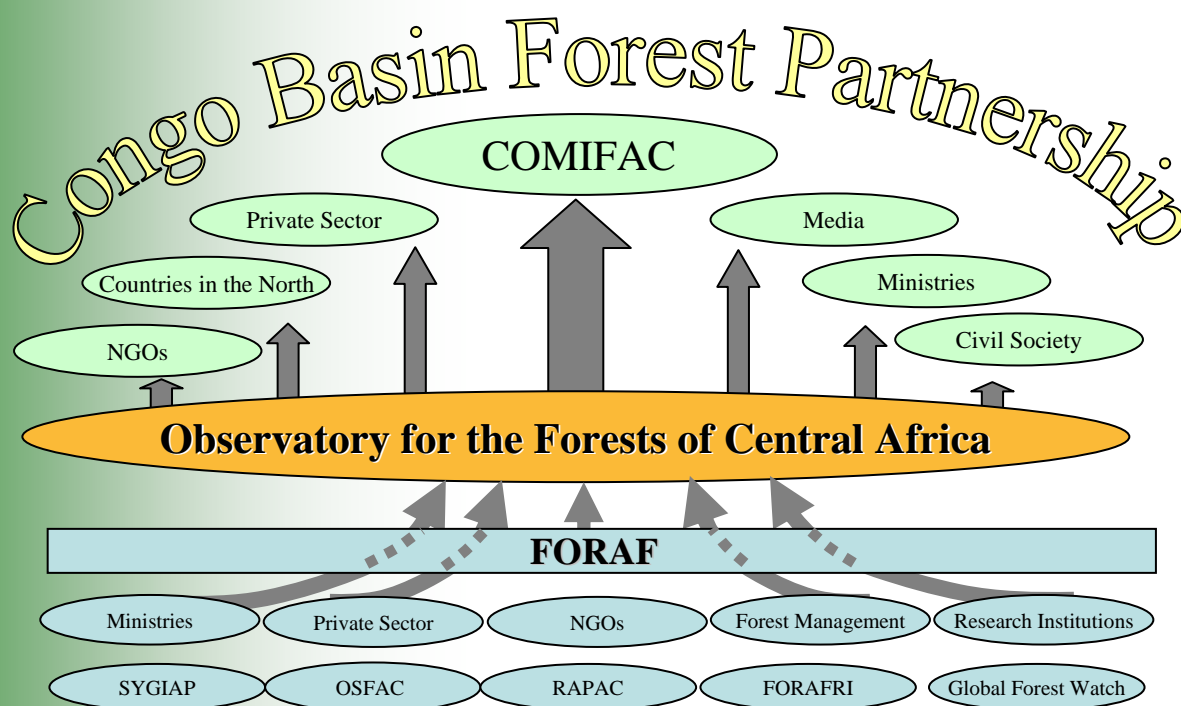


Observatory for the Forests of Central Africa From Information Gathering to Decision Making

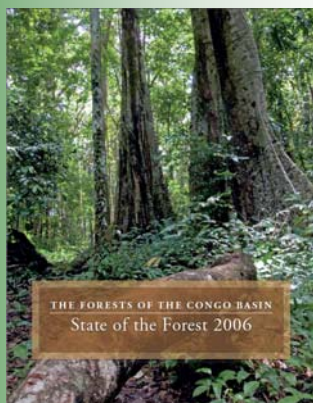
The Observatory for the Forests of Central Africa (OFAC), an initiative of multiple members of the Congo Basin Forests Partnership (CBFP), aims to pool the knowledge and available data necessary to monitor the ecological, environmental, and social aspects of Central Africa's forests. Its creation follows the formidable information sharing effort that led to the 2006 State of the Forest Report.

The establishment of OFAC corresponds to one of the axes in COMIFAC's 'Plan de Convergence'. It will provide COMIFAC and other CBFP members a powerful steering and data sharing tool to promote better governance and the sustainable management of forest ecosystems. The primary objectives of this initiative are to conserve biodiversity, assure the well-being of populations that depend on the forest, and permit the forest to play an important role in the economic development of countries concerned.

The approach adopted for the creation of OFAC, which relies on human resources in the region, makes the development of OFAC a true exercise in capacity building at both the national and regional level. The principal data providers will be COMIFAC and its institutional partners (e.g. RAPAC), the ministries responsible for forest management and the environment, the private sector, protected areas management, forest management, NGOs, international projects, research institutions, universities, etc.



The Observatory will present its results and analyses in reports, indicator tables, and maps. All of which will all be available through a website scheduled to be launched at the end of 2007. Several outreach and training workshops will be held in the region to support the production of quality data and facilitate the use of such data in the decision making process.



The FORAF Project

The European Commission's Contribution to the Observatory for the Forests of Central Africa

As its contribution to the Observatory for the Forests of Central Africa (OFAC) initiative, the European Commission (EC) is funding the **FORAF** project under the Tropical Forests budget line. The EC's Joint Research Centre (JRC), in conjunction with the EC's Delegation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, oversees its implementation and scientific coordination.

FORAF aims, by reinforcing the capacity to collect data and process information, to assure the set up and operation of OFAC, while also building a regional dynamic for OFAC and setting in motion a regional system for monitoring forests.

Project Launch : May 2007 – Duration : 3 years

FORAF Activities : Expected Results

Result 1 : Reinforced capacity to collect reference data through a pilot State of the Forests for Central Africa

- 1.1 Databases cataloguing information on the environment and natural resources
- 1.2 Forest cover mapping
- 1.3 Databases cataloguing socio-economic information
- 1.4 Databases cataloguing information on institutional characteristics of the environment and forest management

Result 2 : Systems for environmental and socio-economic monitoring to aid in decision making for the sustainable management of natural resources

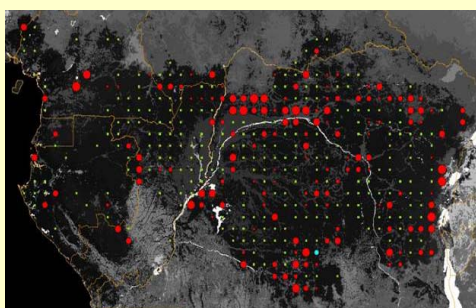
- 2.1 System for monitoring deforestation
- 2.2 System to monitor forestry concessions and the logging industry
- 2.3 Knowledge analysis to contribute to the FLEGT initiative
- 2.4 System for monitoring the valorization and conservation of biodiversity

Result 3 : Creation of a mechanism for a regional observatory

- 3.1 Establish mechanisms for data harmonization and exchange
- 3.2 Design and implement databases and user interfaces
- 3.3 Reinforce regional, national, and local capacity, as well as the appropriation of results
- 3.4 Ensure appropriation of OFAC by African states, the private sector, NGOs, donors, and other interested parties
- 3.5 Emergence of a network of European institutions active in the sector

FORAF is implemented by JRC and a consortium of scientific institutions led by CIRAD-ES (FRANCE) and comprised of the Center for International Forestry Research / CIFOR (Indonesia), Forêt Ressources Management / FRM (France), and the Université catholique de Louvain / UCL (Belgium).

The project's coordination office is located in Kinshasa. It works to synchronize data collection, data staging activities, the analysis of results, and the diffusion of information to target groups via the internet (<http://www.observatoire-comifac.net>)



The first detailed estimates of deforestation in the Congo Basin, carried out by JRC and UCL, show (size of red dot) a concentration of deforestation on the fringes of the forest block: around Gemena, Lisala, and Bumba in the north, Ilebo and Kananga in the south, and Bukavu, Goma, and Butembo in the east.

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