

The Contribution of Central African Forests to the global fight against Climate Change

Context and rationale

The Central African rainforest is the second largest tropical forest basin in the world. Historically, it has been spared from deforestation but now faces mounting pressure. Recent studies estimate that by 2100 the forest in DRC will disappear if the UN population projections materialise and the low efficiency of food and wood energy systems is maintained. Central African countries have made important commitments to reduce threats to their forests and significant donor contributions have been made to support programs to fight deforestation. **However, current efforts will not be sufficient to counter the catastrophic loss of carbon sink, rainfall generation and biodiversity. Further action is required. This is what this contribution seeks to trigger.**

An overview of the contribution

Central African countries engage to increase their climate ambition, maintain/stabilize their forest cover and thus continue to stock the equivalent of approximately 70 GT of C. The Central African rainforest will thus continue to provide livelihoods to 60 million people and maintain regional rainfall patterns. This capacity of the Central African rainforest is under threat mainly due to population increase and expansion of agriculture, so the challenge is to change the production systems of tens of millions of poor households, ensure their food security and slow down the unsustainable population increase.

To realize this contribution countries are/will be:

- revising their INDCs to include the land use and forest sector into the new NDCs, include activities that were not taken into consideration in the calculations of emission reductions;
- implementing the CAFI Declaration, the Letters of Intent and the national investment frameworks;
- establishing governance structures that can manage investments and reforms across different sectors and line ministries;
- and mobilising domestic funding resources.

National investment frameworks (completed or under development) present the country specific measures necessary to reach the objective presented above.

The increased ambition will be showcased during the Summit by:

- The signature of the Letter of Intent between the Republic of Congo and CAFI (commitment to preserve HSC and HCV forests, and funding envelop 65M US\$)
- The announcement of a new partnership (to be confirmed)
- New donor pledges to the region

The Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI), a coalition of Central African and donor countries who signed the CAFI Declaration in New York in 2015, has been addressing this climate and forest challenge in an innovative way. Its programs are preceded by in-depth policy dialogue through Letters of Intent containing timebound milestones to ensure coordination across sectors and high-level buy-in from land use sectors. The counterparts are ministries of finance/economy or Prime Minister/President's Office to ensure leadership by an entity with the capacity and mandate to coordinate across land use sectors (as opposed to engaging solely ministries of environment of forestry.) This approach will be maintained and reinforced in the implementation of this contribution. CAFI is also a Trust Fund currently capitalized at +250 million US\$. **The present contribution seeks to build on the positive results of CAFI and multiply them by increasing commitments from Central African countries and donors, by better coordinating across relevant existing initiatives and bringing in new partners thanks to the positive dynamics created by the Summit.** This will include:

- Alignment of various multilateral and bilateral initiatives with the CAFI Letters of Intent (incl. the policy dialogue by International Financial Institutions providing budget support and the GCF portfolio through a regional program)
- Engagement with the private sector to increase investments and deliver on zero-deforestation commitments (New York Declaration, Amsterdam Declaration, Marrakech Declaration, TFA etc.) by identifying at least one company having made a zero-deforestation pledge to invest in the region and encourage others to follow.
- Increased international public donor funding through renewal of commitments post 2020 for CAFI (through CAFI fund and bilateral funding) – amount to be confirmed
- Engagement of new partners in Central Africa including South-South partners or triangular cooperation including the most important economic partners of the region

Presenting ongoing efforts and new commitments during the Summit would be a unique opportunity to:

- sensitize the international community on the global importance of this forest basin and threats menacing it
- maintain or increase the political engagement of Central African countries and mobilize the international community in favor of increasing investments.
- create a regional follow-up mechanism based on the CAFI Letters of Intent which will guarantee a systematic effort after the Summit to ensure that the commitments are respected, and the international community stay engaged and increase its involvement.

In addition to these efforts, the support of several initiatives will play an important role to realize this contribution:

1. **The African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100)** is a country-led effort to bring 100 million hectares of land in Africa into restoration by 2030 supported by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as the main donor. Several CAFI partner countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo and Democratic Republic of Congo) are also AFR100 member countries, with voluntary commitments to bring more than 25,5 Mio ha of degraded and deforested landscapes under restoration until 2030.
2. **The GEF Congo Basin Impact Programme** seeks to catalyse transformational change in conservation and sustainable management of key transboundary landscapes in the CAFI partner countries through landscape approaches that empower local communities and forest dependent people, and through partnership with the private sector.
3. **The Global Peatlands Initiative** is an effort by leading experts and institutions to save peatlands as the world's largest terrestrial organic carbon stock and to prevent it being emitted into the atmosphere. The world's largest continuous peatland can be found on the border between the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
4. **The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF):** All CAFI countries apart from Equatorial Guinea have been or are still receiving support through the Readiness Fund of the FCPF to develop the foundations for REDD+. DRC and the Republic of Congo have also been accepted into the portfolio of the Carbon Fund. DRC was the first country to sign a contract and stands ready to receive payments once a decrease in deforestation has been evidenced.
5. **UNREDD Programme** supports nationally led REDD+ processes and promotes the informed and meaningful involvement of all stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and other forest-dependent communities, in national and international REDD+ implementation.
6. **Others to be identified in the lead up to the Summit**

How the contribution leverages living natural systems as a solution to avert climate change?

- Halting conversion of forest into other land uses, ending forest degradation, and restoring peatlands would avoid accumulation in the atmosphere of around 30% of global anthropogenic CO₂ emissions.
- Central African forests represent more than 240 million hectares, i.e. the surface of Western Europe and 90% of Africa's dense humid forests. A gigantic carbon sink, representing 5-10 years of global emissions and containing 30% of tropical peat carbon dioxide in its subsoil (approx. 70 GT of C in total);
- Central African rainforests generate large amounts of humid air, which falls as rain nearby and at distant locations (transported by the wind). Large parts of Africa's food production depend on the preservation of the Central African rainforest.
- Forests are also the main reservoir of plant and animal biodiversity. They are home to 80% of terrestrial animal, plant and insect species. And only tropical moist forests contain about 50% of living species.
- Central Africa is home to an invaluable animal and plant biodiversity, the majority of which is endemic in this region, making it one of the most majestic forests in the world: 10,000 species of superior plants including 3000 endemic, 600 species of timber, 1000 bird species, 900 species of butterflies, 280 species of reptiles and 400 species of mammals including rare or endangered animal species including large gorillas, forest elephants and chimpanzees

How might the contribution support both climate, mitigation and adaptation as well as other important co-benefits and social, economic and environmental outcomes in coming years. They may include:

Reduction in carbon emission and carbon capture (GTonnes)

Represents 5-10 years of global emissions and containing 30% of tropical peat carbon dioxide in its subsoil (approx. 70 GT of C in total)

Increasing climate resilience

Regional climate: Humid air generated by the Central African forests falls as rain both in the region and at distant locations (such as Western Africa and Sahel). Agriculture and hydropower production in large parts of Africa depends on the Central African forests.

Social impact (job increase; poverty reduction; Just transition, etc.)

Livelihoods: 60 million people living in/around Central African forests, 40 million living in urban centres depend on the forest for food and fuel

Impact on realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (in particular SDGs 1,2,6,12,13,14,15,16)

Current CAFI programs' contribution to the SDGs (equivalent to 130 MUS\$ of funding in DRC and Gabon, additional programs in these and additional CAFI countries will increase these contributions):

SDG 13 - Climate action: In DRC, CAFI currently [funds programmes](#) with the goal to prevent 40 million tons of CO₂ from entering the atmosphere over the next 5 years. In Gabon, [emissions from forests will be cut by at least 50% by 2025](#).

SDG 1 – No poverty: CAFI-funded [programmes in DRC](#) seek to raise average households revenues by 10 to 20% in forested provinces and assist to establish more than 600 000 ha of community forestry

SDG 2 – Zero hunger: In DRC CAFI is currently funding programmes to establish 172'000 ha of sustainable subsistence agriculture, 11'000 ha of agroforestry and 17'000 ha of perennial crops of which 7'000 ha in savannas

SDG 5 – Gender equality: By supporting family planning and access to modern contraception in DRC, CAFI will help ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health.

SDG 7 – Affordable clean energy: CAFI helps DRC to reform its energy policy and supports more than 100'000 households to adopt clean cooking solutions, 10'000 ha of wood energy plantations and 70'000 ha of natural regeneration

SDG 9 – Industry and infrastructure CAFI supports land use planning in DRC and Gabon to help develop its industry infrastructure and roads with the least possible impact on forests, CAFI supports also the rehabilitation of roads and bridges in DRC to incentivize sustainable rural investments

SDG 15 – Life on land: In Gabon and DRC, CAFI funds national forest monitoring systems to make sure forests are protected, sustainably managed and restored. Combined with integrated land use planning and participatory and sustainable management of forests, this contributes to a number of other SDGs, especially SDG 1, 2 and 13

SDG 17 – Partnership for the Goals The CAFI partnership gathers [7 donors](#), [6 Central African countries](#) and [7 implementing agencies](#) and funds programs dedicated to civil society and indigenous peoples.

Food security

See under SDG 2 – zero hunger

Minimising species extinction and ecological losses and fostering an increase of biodiversity.

In the letter of intent with CAFI Gabon committed to keeping its High Conservation Value forests standing, and Rep Congo will commit to the same during the signing of the LOI at the Summit

Which countries and organisations are involved in the contribution?

DRC, Rep Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Eq. Guinea, CAR, France, Germany, UK, EU, Norway, the Netherlands, Rep Korea, UNDP, FAO, WB, AFD, JICA, UN Habitat, Enabel, UNOPS, umbrella civil society organizations in DRC, Rep Congo and Gabon

How have stakeholders (for example local communities, youth and indigenous peoples, where applicable) been consulted in developing the contribution?

The CAFI national investment frameworks are largely consulted with civil society and CAFI specifically supports programs to increase the capacity of civil society and indigenous peoples' organizations. Further consultations are necessary to finetune the proposal.

Where can the contribution be put into action?

DRC, Rep Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Eq. Guinea, CAR

How the contribution will be delivered? How will different stakeholders be engaged in its implementation?

What are the potential transformational impacts?

CAFI letters of intent are signed by government institutions with a mandate and capacity for intersectoral coordination (DRC-ministry of Finance, Gabon-Ministry of Economy, Rep Congo-Prime Minister, in other countries to be confirmed) providing a model in terms of political commitments. Letters of intent spell out timebound targets that are achieved thanks to programs funded by CAFI and other bilateral funding. The approach is transformational as the causes of forest loss encompass different sectors (agriculture, energy, forestry, land use planning, governance etc.) and fighting against deforestation implies national policies and measures in all these sectors. These reforms are cross boundary in nature (interdependence of the countries of the region for food production, transboundary timber & wildlife trading etc.) so only by working with all the relevant sectors and all the countries in the region that the desired impact can be reached.

Is this initiative contributing to other Climate Action Summit workstreams (industry transition; energy transition; climate finance and carbon pricing; infrastructure, cities and local action; resilience and adaptation; youth and citizen mobilization; social and political drivers; mitigation strategy)?

Mitigation strategy, adaptation and resilience, energy transition, climate finance and carbon pricing, social drivers and political drivers (through family planning, enhanced intersectoral coordination; improved transparency and stakeholder participation)

How does this contribution build upon examples of experience to date? How does the contribution link with different ongoing initiatives?

The proposed measures under “Overview of the Contribution” are based on 3 years of operational experience of the CAFI partnership as well as decades of experience of the entities associated to CAFI. CAFI also acts a coordination mechanism as many of its programs are implemented with co-funding from other bi-or multilateral initiatives (Forest Investments Program of the Climate Investment Funds, GEF Congo Basin Impact Programme, World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, bilateral funds from EU, DFID, AFD and Germany etc.)

What are the mechanisms for funding (with specific emphasis on potential for partnerships)?

The CAFI Trust Fund is capitalized at +250 US\$ with 150M US\$ already disbursed. This will be complemented with additional pledges from donors, bilateral grant funding aligned with CAFI, renewal of donor commitments post 2020, a potential regional program with GCF and aligned funding from bilateral development banks.

What are the means of stewardship, metrics for monitoring?

For the contribution a detailed regional action plan will be developed by the parties concerned by COP25/26. At the country level, Letters of Intent with timebound targets are and will be used. This is monitored by the signatory government entity (Finance, Economy Ministry or PM) of the LOI domestically and through various exchanges and policy dialogue between the country and the CAFI Executive Board including a milestone monitoring matrix

What is the communication strategy?

Websites, films, social media, conferences esp. dialogue with NGOs

What are the details of proponents (indicating the degree of commitment among the countries and organizations that are named).

CAFI Declaration signed by: DRC, Rep Congo, Cameroon, Gabon, Eq. Guinea, CAR, France, Germany, UK, EU, Norway, the Netherlands, Rep Korea

Letters of Intent signed with DRC and Gabon, Rep Congo in negotiation

Donors having contributed to the CAFI Trust Fund: Norway and France

Donors pledging funds: EU, France, Germany (tbc), Rep of Korea (tbc), Netherlands (tbc)

Partners invited to join the partnership: tbc

Agencies having received CAFI funds: UNDP, FAO, WB, AFD, JICA, UN Habitat

Agencies in negotiation: UNOPS, Enabel

Potential: GIZ, KfW, AfDB

Civil society organizations benefitting from CAFI funding: GTCRR, REPALF, Gabon ROSCEVAC

Strategic partnership developed or under development: EU FLEGT, TFA African Palm Oil Initiative, GCF, GEF Congo Basin Impact program, WWF, FCPF