

Section I: Progress towards the implementation of the forest instrument and the achievement of the GOFs as well as the contribution of forests and the IAF to the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs

A. Progress towards implementation of the Forest Instrument

- 1. Briefly describe actions (e.g. regulatory, financial/economic and informational/educational) taken by your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process to foster political commitment for sustainable forest management (SFM).*

COMIFAC countries forest ecosystems consist of an exceptional biodiversity, which makes up an incalculable potential for the socio-economic development of Central Africa. Acknowledging the economic and ecological importance of these ecosystems, as well as the growing threats posed on them, Central African Heads of State undertook in March 1999 in Yaoundé, through a declaration called "Yaoundé Declaration", to collectively work for the conservation and the sustainable management of their countries' forest ecosystems with a bid to support the social and economic development efforts of their people.

Within the framework of the implementation of this Declaration, an Action Plan divided up into 10 domains, called Convergence Plan, was developed and adopted by Heads of State in February 2005. This Plan is a joint platform of priority interventions to be carried out at sub-regional and national levels.

On the basis of the priorities set out in the Convergence Plan, some progresses have been made in recent years. Some of these achievements are:

- The adoption by the Ministers councils of regional policy guidelines notably on non timber forest products in 2008 (NTFP), on forest control in 2008, on access and benefit sharing in 2010 (ABS), on the participation of indigeneous people and local communities and NGO to the management of forest in 2010 and on forestry and environmental training in 2012 ;
- The adoption of a regional action plan to reinforce the implementation of wildlife laws enforcement in 2012;
- The elaboration of a regional guidelines on the creation of the transboundary protected areas in 2014;
- The creation of news transboundary protected areas like the Binational Conkouati-Mayumba-Gamba between Congo and Gabon in 2009, the Binational lac Télé-lac Tumba (BILTLT) between Congo and DRC in 2010, the Binational Sena Oura-Bouba Ndjida between Cameroon and Chad in 2013;
- The creation of a regional working group on forest governance in 2013 besides three other regional existing working group (biodiversity, climate change and land degradation and desertification).

With a view to strengthening the implementation of national laws, sub regional, regional and international Agreements and Conventions governing wildlife management, the Council of the COMIFAC's Ministers adopted in 2012 the Sub regional action plan of the COMIFAC countries Members to strengthen implementation of national wildlife laws (PAPECALF) for the period running from 2012-2017. This action plan provides a comprehensive framework of actions needed to strengthen the implementation of laws on the wildlife trade.

The objectives of this Action Plan are: (1) to foster cooperation and collaboration between relevant law enforcement authorities and prosecution authorities the implementation of wildlife laws at national level as well as across the countries of the COMIFAC sphere;

(2) to increase investigations especially in key transit or border areas, domestic markets and cross-border areas; (3) to raise awareness of illegal wildlife trade issues; and (4) to implement efficient deterrents to fight poaching and illegal trading in wildlife, ensuring that prosecution is regularly conducted, in compliance with national laws and the results of enforcement and prosecution are monitored, published and widely disseminated.

Following the adoption of the Action Plan by the Council of Ministers of COMIFAC, the Executive Secretariat elaborated and established a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the implementation of the Action Plan based on global indicators. At the sub regional level, we put in place a Sub Working Group on Wildlife and Protected Areas (SGTFAP) which is part of the Central African Biodiversity Working Group (GTBAC) of COMIFAC. One of its roles is the implementation of actions at sub regional level, such as training, harmonization criminal sanctions, communication, as well as coordinating collective action to dissuade illegal hunting and the illegal wildlife trade. At national level a National Coordination Unit (CNU) which is part of the Ministry in charge of Wildlife in each member country of COMIFAC will be established.

Two tri-party Agreements on cross-border anti-poaching collaboration have been signed in June 2012 between the Central African Republic, Cameroon and Chad and between Cameroun, Republic of Congo and Gabon. The aim of these Agreements is to develop a joint strategy to combat cross-border poaching and to put in place an operational mechanism suitable for the strengthening of cross-border cooperation, improving the coordination of interventions and the involvement of key stakeholders.

Collaboration between Central African Governments is essential to effectively combat transnational wildlife crime. These Agreements come at an opportune time to help stop the ongoing slaughtering of elephant populations in Central Africa. For the first time in history, these countries addressed the poaching of elephants at the regional level, which involves actors operating across multiple countries. It will help stop the massacre of elephants in our sub region.

Various capacities building activities have been carry out within the sub region in order to strengthen capacity for combating poaching and illicit international trafficking of forests products. WWF-GFTN/TRAFFIC Initiative of development of the criteria and policies to define and check the legality of wood and the sub region Developed a system of traceability of Timber.

Please describe the main challenges encountered and/or lessons learned.

The main challenge remains the effective implementation of the PAPECALF and the Agreements on cross-border anti-poaching by concerned stakeholders at national level. This

implementation needs financial resources and effective collaboration of donor and technical partners. Anti-poaching approaches are essential to safeguard protected areas, but to be successful in the long run, it is critical that these actions take into account activities throughout the entire territory of a country and not just within protected areas.

The illicit exploitation of forest products is done in the majority of cases with the complicity of indigenous and local communities which are very poor. Therefore, it is important to develop the capacity of the communities in the various socio-economic fields in order to fight against poverty.

5. *List and briefly describe activities aimed at mobilizing new and additional*

some regional project. Some of these projects are:

The Congo Basin Ecosystems Conservation Support Programme (PACEBCo) funded by African Development Bank (AfDB) for a total amount of 50 million \$ US from 2009 to 2014 ;

The regional capacity building project on REDD+ funded by GEF through the World Bank for an amount of 13 million \$ US from 2011 to 2016;

The promotion of forest certification programme funded by German Cooperation through KfW for an amount of 13 million euros from 2012 to 2016.

Please describe the main challenges encountered and/or lessons learned.

The main challenges are amongst others the complexity of procedures of the international financing mechanisms, the weak of internal capacity within COMIFAC to master the innovative financing systems.

B. Progress towards the achievement of the GOFs

1. Please describe actions taken by your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process and/or by other major stakeholders in your region/sub-region to help achieve the following:

GOF1, “Reverse the loss of forest cover worldwide through sustainable forest management, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation”

At the regulatory and institutional level, there were the adoption of a Sub-regional Action Plan to Combating the lands Degradation and Desertification (PASR-LCD) by the council of Ministers in 2008, the creation of a Sub regional Working Group on lands degradation and desertification.

At operational level, many countries in Central Africa carried out various programmes and projects on restoration, afforestation and reforestation. COMIFAC is also promoting the REDD+ initiatives in the sub region and few pilot projects on REDD+ have been developed in few countries (DRC, Cameroon and Congo).

GOF2, “Enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including by improving the livelihoods of forest dependent people”

Forest is one of the major natural asset which contributes to the gross domestic product (GDP) of many COMIFAC countries. This contribution ranges from 2 to

6% of GDP despite the consequences of world economic crisis.

To enhance forest-based social benefits, community or social forestry initiatives have been experimented in some countries. Also the communal forestry initiatives are gradually experimented in the Sub region and some countries have developed the mechanism to share the benefits arise from the exploitation of the forests with the local communities.

Finally, COMIFAC is promoting innovative and transformative projects that change the way people live in and earn a living from the Congo Basin forests, e.g. the implementation of PACEBCo and non timber forest product initiatives in the sub region.

GOF3, “Increase significantly the area of protected forests worldwide and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products from sustainably

2. Please provide additional information specific to your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process on progress towards the achievement of the GOFs.

No additional information

C. Contribution of forests and the IAF to the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs

1. *Please describe studies or initiatives in your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process that capture the contribution of forests to the achievement of the internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs.*

Thanks to the support of FAO, COMIFAC conducted a study p5.5 g20(O)-27()28(n8n

The important strength of the current IAF is its voluntary and non binding nature. This gives some flexibility to countries to adapt the instrument according to their national circumstances.

As the weaknesses of the IAF, there is less interest of developed countries and donors to support the implementation of the instrument and to set up an international finance mechanism. Consequently, forestry sector is not sufficiently funded in developing countries.

For the areas of improvement of the current IAF, the monitoring and assessment system should be reinforced. In this case, the set of specific criteria and indicators should be defined. Also, an international financing mechanism related to SFM should be determined.

2. *Has the input of your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process been adequately taken into account in the Forum's deliberations?*

3. *What measures has your organization undertaken to strengthen the current IAF? Please list the most important measures (maximum five):*

Some measures undertaken by COMIFAC are:

- The adoption of the policy guidelines (NTFP, forest control, ABS, etc.) to ensure SFM;
- The creation of sub regional platform (forest governance, biodiversity, land degradation, etc.) to foster participation and reinforce capacities of stakeholders on SFM
- The creation of the transboundary protected areas complex between two or three countries
- The creation of Sangha trinational trust fund (innovative financial resources) to support the management of Sangha trinational protected area complex between Cameroon, Congo and CAR.

4. *How would your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process envisage a strengthened regional/sub-regional component in a future IAF?*

5. *Has your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process worked jointly with member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF)² and/or*

² CPF member organizations: Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), International

major stakeholders to support the work of UNFF? If yes, please evaluate the overall collaboration.

COMIFAC has a good collaboration with many partners and some are member organizations of the CPF. Some of these partners are: CIFOR, FAO, ITTO, ICRAF, CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC, UNFF, GEF, World Bank, AfDB, IUCN, WWF, TRAFFIC.

6. *How would your respective regional, sub-regional organization/process envisage a strengthened collaboration with CPF member organizations and/or major stakeholders in a revised IAF?*

COMIFAC will continuous to strength its collaboration with the CPF member organizations and other members organizations and/or major stakeholders of IAF

Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Secretariat of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat (UNFF), Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), The World Bank, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)