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## **Central Africa: Urgent action needed to prevent drastic loss of the World's second largest tropical forest**

***Commitments from Central African countries to achieve ambitious climate and forests targets are met by increased action by the EU, France, Germany, Norway South Korea and UK with CAFI. But much more is needed, donors warn.***

**New York, 23 September** – Central African forests are a vital carbon sink for the globe, and an essential resource for communities and national governments; their continued existence and protection are key to our planet's future. At the UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Summit, donors to the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) today joined forces to reiterate support and financial contributions.

Early warning signs, such as the unprecedented level and pace of forest loss observed in the past three years in some parts of the region, point to extreme risks. The world's second largest tropical forest could undergo drastic change. Urgent, scaled up action – from governments, development finance institutions, investors and companies – is needed to tackle multiple threats to forests.

Actions have human and financial costs. CAFI donors, historic or new, acknowledged decisions made by national institutions and the potential immediate benefits forgone by a country choosing not to convert forests into more immediately profitable land uses. The financial costs of conserving forests – including development and enforcement of land use laws – are also potentially high. But these costs are dwarfed by the consequences arising from the irreversible loss of these forests and the benefits arriving in the longer and medium terms.

"Beyond rewarding reductions in forest loss, we need to provide Central African countries, especially those with low historic deforestation rates, with more incentives to preserve standing forests, and value forest conservation and good forest stewardship", said Ola Elvestuen, Norway's Minister of Climate and Environment.

"CAFI's latest agreements are ambitious: 150 million US dollars of results-based payments for emission reductions and removals with Gabon – who aims to maintain 98 percent of its extensive forest cover - and 65 million US dollars with the Republic of Congo – a country committing to protect its high carbon stocks and biodiversity-rich forests and refrain from draining precious peatlands," he added.

"These forests are important to the economies of the countries of the region. Their protection is vital for the countries who harbour them, their neighbours of the sub-region and beyond, and the world as a whole," underlined Chongho Park, Deputy Minister of the Korea Forest Service, Republic of Korea.

Central African countries have set ambitious and legitimate targets to reach emerging economy status in the next years and seek to diversify their economies. They are facing highly complex choices and must reconcile their national economic development with global and national environmental concerns

such as climate change and biodiversity loss. Efforts to enhance nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and to raise ambitions in this respect are critical.

“We welcome the concrete commitments Central African countries have made – and continue to make – to achieve those ambitious targets, as well as the political mobilization of the region’s leaders to contribute to the UN Climate Action Summit,” declared Dr Maria Flachsbarth, State Secretary to Germany’s Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Concrete examples of commitments made and actions taken so far at the national level include:

- the stabilization of forest cover
- the non-conversion of their most precious forests with high carbon stock and high conservation values, highlighted in Letters of intent with CAFI
- the certification of forest concessions
- the restriction of agro-industrial plantations larger than 5 hectares to savanna areas
- the protection of peatlands from draining and drying out

CAFI donor commitments resonate with the Manifesto of the Nature-Based Solutions Coalition – specifically on increasing the mainstreaming of such solutions in climate policy and instruments, and on enhancing regional cooperation.

“CAFI is ready to support the ambitious and committed forest countries that deliver results to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement, and will take stock at the COP 25 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Chile,” concluded Cyrille Pierre, Director for Sustainable Development of France’s Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

In further alignment with the Manifesto call for shifts in finance and governance and increased ambitions from all parties, donors stepped up with new pledges, channelled with and through CAFI: the Letter of Intent with the Republic of Congo (65 million US dollars from France, the EU, Norway, Germany and the UK); the results-based agreement with Gabon (150 million US dollars from Norway); and new pledges from Germany and South Korea of 33 and 2 million US dollars, respectively.

#### **Additional information**

- Central African rainforests cover the size of Western Europe and, with the peatlands they harbor, store up to 70 billion tons of carbon, equivalent to 5 to 10 years of global greenhouse gas emissions.
- These forests regulate sub-regional rainfall patterns and are home to some of the largest watersheds of the world, especially the Congo and Ogooué rivers, contributing to agricultural production and energy of the continent. They harbour an extraordinary biodiversity and provide livelihood to tens of millions of people including food, shelter, medicine and cooking energy.
- Established in 2015, CAFI supports strategic and holistic national investment frameworks based on REDD+ and low emission development, focusing on six high forest cover countries in Central African region, namely Cameroon, Congo (Republic of), the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.
- Members of the CAFI Executive Board are : France (Chair), Germany, Norway, the European Union, the Netherlands, the UK, South Korea

#### **For more information**

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