

# Advancing Green Development in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has the second largest swath of rainforests in the world— 138 million hectares, accounting for more than half of the total remaining rainforest in the Congo Basin. About 40 million rural Congolese depend on the forests for their food, income, energy, shelter, medicines and cultural needs. Indigenous groups, including the Pygmies, rely almost entirely on forests. The forests also harbor significant endemic animal species and plant diversity.

The Congolese forests are described as the “second lung” of the planet, and serve an important public good. Although rates of deforestation in the DRC are low compared to tropical forests in the Amazon and Southeast Asia, almost half a million hectares are lost each year. Annual deforestation rates have doubled since 1990 and the country’s forests are under increasing threat of agricultural encroachment, mining and hydrocarbon activities, illegal logging and meeting basic needs of a growing population.



## Government commitment

The DRC Government is committed to slowing, and eventually halting, forest loss. In 2012, it adopted a REDD+ strategy, which illustrates a vision for how a country can meet its long-term development aspirations through a green economy. The strategy aims to stabilize forest cover on two-thirds of the country’s land area by 2030 and maintain it thereafter.

The DRC views the environment and efforts to combat climate change as one of the strategic areas of its national policy. In its 2011-2015 Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, protecting the environment and combating climate change were jointly identified as one of the four pillars of development in the DRC, alongside strengthening

governance and peace-building; diversifying the economy, accelerating economic growth, and promoting employment; and improving access to basic social services and strengthening human capital.

The DRC submitted to the UNFCCC an Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) on mitigation that presents specific emission reduction goals for the land sector including reducing deforestation, increasing reforestation, and improving agricultural practices.

### The Central African Forest Initiative

The Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) was announced in September 2015 as a partnership among African nations, Brazil, four European countries and the EU. CAFI calls for the six African member countries (Central African Republic, Cameroon, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of Congo) to devise national REDD+ investment frameworks - supported by the highest levels of government and across government sectors - that tackle the complex factors leading to deforestation. The initiative prioritizes long-term solutions that reap results over short-term, one-time actions. Norway was the first country to pledge funds to CAFI—up to \$47 million dollars per year through 2020.

## National REDD+ Investment Framework

DRC will be one of the first countries to submit its REDD+ Investment Plan to the Central African Forest Initiative (see box) in December 2015, which sets out concrete actions and partners for implementation. The plan includes the investment funding that DRC has already successfully mobilized to implement its national REDD+ strategy, such as the For-

est Investment Program (FIP, \$60 million), which targets hot spots of deforestation and forest degradation in three urban supply areas for agricultural products and fuel wood: Kinshasa, Kinsangani and Mbuji-Mayi/Kananga.

The Government will request CAFI funding for the nationally agreed plan which outlines a strategic set of additional activities related to: sustainable agriculture; sustainable energy; sustainable forest management; mitigating the impacts of mining and hydrocarbon exploration; improved land use planning; improving land rights; reducing pressure from migration and lack of economic opportunities; and improving overall governance including building capacity to increase transparency and stakeholder consultation. Implementation of these activities is expected to increase household incomes in program areas by 10-20% through improved crop varieties, cultivation of perennial crops and agroforestry activities as well as to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation by up to 20% compared to business-as usual practices.

## Forest Landscape Restoration

Restoring degraded areas that have been depleted—both economically and environmentally—is also included in the national investment framework,. Reforestation is of critical importance to the well-being of rural communities in the DRC. Not only do forests provide ecological functions to communities, such as rainfall and clean water, they also can provide fuel and construction materials for local villages and nearby cities, taking pressure off primary forests. The DRC

has pledged to restore 8 million hectares of degraded lands under the Bonn Challenge Initiative, and 3 million hectares by 2030 in its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the UNFCCC. The country is currently working on a degraded lands map and identifying priority sites for forest landscape restoration using the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM).



## Mai Ndombe Emission Reductions Program

DRC is a leader within the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), a World Bank trust fund aimed at piloting payments for emission reductions in large-scale jurisdictions. DRC was the first country to submit its Readiness Package, and among the first to be selected in the FCPF Carbon Fund pipeline—which will provide the DRC the future opportunity to access around \$50 million if it is able to demonstrate, measure and report emission reductions. The country is now designing an Emission Reductions Program that is projected to generate reductions of 33 million tons over 5 years, and over 250 million tons by 2030. The program will benefit the 1.8 million inhabitants of the Mai Ndombe province by improving livelihood conditions and sustainable land use management practices.

For more information on the DRC, see:

<https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/democratic-republic-congo>