

Study underlines importance of Congo Basin for global climate and biodiversity

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With its 1.7 billion square kilometres, an area equivalent to 5 times the size of Germany, the Congo Basin forest is the world's second largest tropical forest. The 'State of the Congo Basin Forests 2010' report launched in Douala, Cameroon, at the Annual meeting of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP), provides a comprehensive and detailed assessment of the status of this crucial pool for climate regulation and natural resources. It looks at deforestation patterns, points to trends in sustainable forest management and highlights threats to biodiversity.

The Congo Basin, which spans over six countries (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Congo, [Democratic Republic of Congo](#), Equatorial Guinea and Gabon), contains 25% of the total carbon stored in [tropical rainforests](#) worldwide. The report explains the important role the Central African countries can have in future climate conventions and in particular in the negotiations on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and [Forest Degradation](#) (REDD). The low [deforestation rates](#) measured here with satellite imagery (0.1% per year for the period 1990-2000 and 0.2% per year for the period 2000-2005) are far below those observed in Latin America and in Southeast Asia and make the Congo Basin a possible role model for other tropical forest regions.

The report also outlines that further efforts are needed to protect the habitat of many animal species. Central African countries have developed a dense network of protected areas and established national plans to reach the target of the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#), i.e. 17% of the land under protection. However, the lack of long-term

management strategies still represents severe threats to the population of big mammals (elephants, gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos, and okapis). The industrial poaching of elephants for ivory accounts for 70% of the total illegal trade and has cut in half their population in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Dominique Ristori, Director General of the European Commission's in-house science service, the Joint Research Centre (JRC), commented: "We need to make sure that we provide the best support to developing countries in their fight against climate change and their efforts to preserve biodiversity while at the same time alleviating poverty. This report, funded and supported by EuropeAid and the JRC provides exactly the information needed to make sensible policy decisions on trade-offs between the different uses of these forest resources ranging from carbon sink, areas for biodiversity to economic exploitation."

More information: The report "State of the Forests 2010" and the supporting information are available in French and in English on the OFAC web site www.observatoire-comifac.net

Provided by European Commission Joint Research Centre

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