Forest Declaration Assessment 2022, Regional Assessment Fact Sheet: Monitoring Progress Toward Combating Deforestation in Congo Basin

Background

The *Forest Declaration Assessment*, building on past monitoring of global forestry goals, evaluates the status of the various public and private actions needed to protect forests, as well as their quality and level of implementation. It looks at the progress to be made towards the 2030 forest commitments made at COP26 in Glasgow, and the changes in public and private policies needed to achieve these goals.

This year's *Forest Declaration Assessment* includes a regional-level study conducted in the Congo Basin. Ranked as the world's second largest tropical forest and a major carbon sink, this region of Central Africa plays an important role in achieving global forest goals, sustainable development goals, and the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

This regional study was developed in partnership with regional and national civil society organizations and experts, who contributed to data collection and the development of research questions. The organizations involved are: ABIOGeT, ACB-ONG, Acteurs du Tourisme Durable, Brainforest Gabon, Cabinet Essono Ondo pour le Social et l'Environnement, Geospatial Technology Group, Réseau Femmes Africaines pour le Développement Durable (REFADD), Réseau des Jeunes des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale (REJEFAC), and WWF-RDC.

The Congo Basin

The Congo Basin forests in Central Africa form a block of dense rainforests that spans six countries. They constitute the largest forest block after the Amazon and play an important global role in preserving biodiversity and storing carbon. As of January 2020, the total area of dense rainforests in the Congo Basin was estimated at 200 million hectares (ha), of which 184.7 million remain undisturbed with no visible signs of disturbance.

The undisturbed forests in Central Africa absorb more carbon than forests in the Amazon or in Southeast Asia, and are now the largest tropical carbon sink in the world. Between 2001 and 2019, the forests of the Congo Basin were capable of removing 0.61 net gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalents (GtCO2e) per year, which is nearly six times the net absorption of the Amazon Basin forests, for a surface area 40% smaller.

The forest ecosystems of the Congo Basin represent about 70% of the forest cover of the African continent, of which nearly half are dense lowland forests. One in five of all species currently recorded globally is found in these forests. There are 20,000 species of plants (8,000 of which are endemic), 1,300 species of birds, 336 species of amphibians, 400 varieties of reptiles and 400 varieties of mammals. Most of these species are placed on the world's red list of threatened species. In addition, there more than 200 new animal species since 2000.

The forests of the Congo Basin provide livelihoods for [60 million people](#) who live in or near forest areas, provide essential ecosystem services for the region, and fulfill essential social and cultural functions for indigenous and local peoples. Forests also indirectly contribute to feeding the 40 million people who live in urban centers near these forest areas. Almost two thirds of the population of the six countries whose borders include the Congo Basin Forest live in poverty. These countries include:

Cameroon:
- 43.0% of its land was forested in 2020 and **deforestation increased by 25%** in 2021
- Population: 27.2 million
- Poverty rate: 26% (assessed in 2014)

Central African Republic:
- 35.8% of its land was forested in 2020 and **deforestation increased by 71%** in 2021
- Population: 4.9 million people
- Poverty rate: 65.9% (assessed in 2008)

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):
- 55.6% of its land was forested in 2020 and **deforestation increased by 3%** in 2021
- Population: 92.4 million people
- Poverty rate: 77.2% (assessed in 2012)

Equatorial Guinea:
- 25.2% of its land was forested in 2020 and **deforestation increased by 8%** in 2021
- Population: 1.4 million people
- Poverty rate: 23.2% (assessed in 2018)

Gabon:
- 91.3% of its land was forested in 2020 and **deforestation decreased by 28%** in 2021
- Population: 2.3 million people
- Poverty rate: 3.4% (assessed in 2017)

Republic of Congo (ROC):
- 64.3% of its land was forested in 2020 and **deforestation decreased by 30%** in 2021
- Population: 5.7 million people
- Poverty rate: 39.6% (assessed in 2011)

Deforestation in Congo Basin countries between 2010 and 2021. The dotted line represents the trajectory to reach the goal of ending deforestation by 2030. Source: *Forest Declaration Assessment* 2022, based on data from

Global Forest Watch (Curtis et al. 2018)