

For Immediate Release



Central African and Donor Partner Countries Announce a Joint Declaration of Intent on REDD+ in the Congo Basin



High-level representatives of seven Central African countries and seven donor partner countries and the European Commission gather in Durban, South Africa to underscore the urgency of accelerating the implementation of REDD+ in the Congo Basin.



[7 December, 2011, Durban, South Africa] The unprecedented Joint Declaration of Intent on REDD+ in the Congo Basin represents a renewed commitment from Central African countries and donors to scale up REDD+ implementation.



Today's Declaration recognizes the vital role that tropical forests play in addressing climate change and the critical importance of the Congo Basin in this, as the second largest tropical rainforest in the world. The region has more than 200 million hectares of largely intact forests that are rich in biodiversity, and is home to more than 120 million people. Approximately 50 million of them are dependent upon forests for their livelihoods and cultures, and the majority of them live in poverty.



REDD+ refers to national and international policies and actions focused on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, as well as enhancing the crucial role that forests play in providing basic ecosystem services (notably water resources, soil protection, and biodiversity) and in improving the living conditions of populations in tropical forest countries.



In issuing the Joint Declaration along with several other ministers and high-level officials, His Excellency Henri DJOMBO, Minister of Sustainable Development, Forest Economics, and Environment, Republic of the Congo, stated that, "The countries in and around the Congo Basin have a special responsibility to establish a solid institutional foundation upon which REDD+ programmes can be built. We look forward to working closely with our development partners to rapidly move forward with our efforts to make it possible for us to take full advantage of all possible incentives to reduce deforestation and forest degradation as a critical component of our low carbon development strategies. Our best wish is that the partners will strongly support efforts for the sustainable management of the Congo Basin forest with important financial resources and early in 2012."



The Honorable Gregory Barker, Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change, United Kingdom, stated "Destruction of the world's forests contributes more to

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climate change than emissions from all the planes and cars put together. The Congo Basin is the second largest area of rainforest in the world so it plays an important role in avoiding and reducing future emissions. I am pleased so many countries have come forward to declare our joint intentions to speed up this new international initiative in this critically important region.”



Mr. Raymond Mbitikon, Executive Secretary of the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC), noted that “Central African countries have a solid track record of cooperation and coordination on forest conservation in the Congo Basin. We look forward to the opportunity to accelerate our efforts as a result of the transparent, sustainable, predictable, and results-oriented support we will receive from our development partners.”



The Honorable Erik Solheim, Minister of Environment and International Development, Kingdom of Norway, stated, “Saving the beauty, biodiversity, and ecosystem services of the Congo Basin rainforests is essential to the future of the world. Today we have taken one important step towards that goal. The road will be long and hard, but we are committed to walk it together.”



The Joint Declaration is supported by the following countries:



Central African Countries: Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, and Rwanda



Donor Partner Countries: Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Norway, United Kingdom, United States of America, and the European Commission



For a copy of the Joint Declaration of Intent on REDD+ in the Congo Basin and more information about the process that led to its announcement, please visit www.merid.org/congobasin.



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