

CALL TO ACTION

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS, INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES OF THE CONGO BASIN

For the fight against climate change and the protection of forests

WHO IS MAKING THIS APPEAL?

We, civil society organizations, representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities (PACL) of the five countries of the Congo Basin (Cameroon, Gabon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and Republic of Congo), gathered in Douala during the sub-regional dialogues of May 2025 and May 2026, make this joint appeal at the end of a participatory process combining exchanges in plenary, group work and prioritization exercises conducted with all actors involved in the governance of natural resources and the fight against climate change in the sub-region.

Why this call, why now?

The Congo Basin, the world's second-largest tropical rainforest, covers nearly 240 million hectares and stores between 60 and 70 billion tons of carbon. It is home to over 130 million people and more than 150 ethnic groups, including several indigenous peoples, and more than half of this population depends directly on forest resources for their livelihoods. This region, essential to global climate balance, is under increasing pressure: agricultural expansion, illegal logging, and the granting of mining permits in forest and community areas, land-use conflicts, and land grabbing.

While several international instruments and sub-regional mechanisms already exist, their implementation remains insufficient: weak consideration of the concerns of local communities, indigenous peoples, and civil society organizations in decision-making; limited access to climate finance; underrepresented of these same actors in international negotiations; and customary and indigenous rights are still incompletely recognized. It is on the basis of these shared observations that we are today calling upon the governments of the Congo Basin, sub-regional institutions (COMIFAC, ECCAS, and CEMAC), technical and financial partners, the Conference of the Parties on climate (UNFCCC) and on biodiversity (CBD), as well as other relevant international and sub-regional bodies in the areas of forests, climate, and human rights.

OUR KEY REQUESTS

The priorities outlined below are derived from the same participatory process and are presented in the order we consider priority: the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, access to climate finance, inclusive management of forests and biodiversity, and finally governance and sub-regional policies.

1. Secure the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities

Observation : The rights of indigenous peoples and local communities remain poorly recognized, their involvement in climate and forest-related processes remains limited, and traditional knowledge is insufficiently valued in public policies.

We ask :

- The legal recognition of the rights of sedentary communities and nomadic indigenous peoples, including transhumance corridors;
- Facilitating access for indigenous peoples to land and natural resources;
- The effective integration of traditional knowledge into forest and land management policies;
- Support for the revitalization of traditional knowledge and governance systems of PACLs;
- The definition of quotas for the representation of local communities and indigenous peoples in national and international decision-making bodies related to climate and forests.

2. Guarantee direct and transparent access to climate finance

Observation : Access to climate finance remains limited for local actors, particularly civil society organizations and communities. The majority of this funding remains indirect, with poor traceability and insufficient effectiveness on the ground.

We ask :

- A significant increase in climate and forest-related funding allocated to the Congo Basin;
- The establishment and strengthening of climate and forest financing mechanisms that offer direct, equitable and simplified access to civil society organizations and communities in the Congo Basin;
- Increased transparency in the use of climate funds;
- Rigorous monitoring of the concrete impact of funding on beneficiary communities.

3. Promote inclusive forest and biodiversity management

Observation : The Congo Basin faces increasing pressure from deforestation, extractive activities, agricultural expansion and human-wildlife conflicts, which weaken both ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

We ask :

- Stop the conversion of forest land for non-forest uses and fight against deforestation
- The operationalization of the COMIFAC convergence plan by all member states;
- The inclusive review of sub-regional and national policies relating to forest conservation, the fight against climate change and food sovereignty;
- The effective consideration of free, prior informed consent (FPIC) in national legislation;
- The institutionalization of participatory management of forests and other natural resources with local communities and indigenous peoples, including nomadic herders, forest communities and farmers;
- The development and testing of a participatory mechanism for the prevention and management of human-wildlife conflicts.

OUR COMMITMENT

The organizations, signatories to this appeal reaffirm their commitment to pursuing a constructive dialogue with all stakeholders and to actively contribute to the implementation of these priorities, through monitoring commitments made, knowledge production, and the continuous strengthening of advocacy efforts by actors in the Congo Basin. We call for a joint and urgent mobilization, commensurate with the importance of the Congo Basin to the global climate, planetary biodiversity, and the populations that depend on it.

Done in Douala, Cameroon.

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