



# AfDB and Climate Change

## Support Program to Preserve the Congo Basin Ecosystems

The dense forests of the Congo River Basin cover 200 million hectares in ten countries, and can sequester enormous amounts of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). Home to unique species of flora and fauna, the forest is a rich repository of natural resources that provide many people with their primary source of income. The forests are being cut down.



Poor farmers and villagers rely on the forest for subsistence farming and use the wood as fuel. The timber industry, a major employer of thousands of workers in these countries, has been increasing its activities in the last five years.

Fossil fuel combustion is the primary source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions globally, but deforestation and forest degradation constitute the largest source of CO<sub>2</sub> emission in Central Africa, accounting for about 90% of the annual release from the region. The Congo Basin forests contain an estimated 25-30 billion tons of carbon, or roughly 4 years of current global anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The Congo Basin region is currently not a large global source of carbon emissions when compared with countries like Brazil and Indonesia, however the potential for increases in carbon emissions from deforestation in the Basin is huge. Current estimates of carbon emissions from deforestation for Central Africa range from 20 to 60 million tons per year.

Estimates of future deforestation in Central Africa indicate that by 2050, forest clearance in the Democratic Republic of

Congo will release over 30 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, approximately equivalent to the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the UK over the last 60 years. Protecting an additional 1% of forests in Central Africa would preserve about 230 million tons of carbon, or about one-third of the UK's annual greenhouse gas emissions. This is worth more than \$500 million in today's carbon market. This money can assist the Congo Basin Forest countries to implement climate change adaptation projects that will contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

To ensure that people living in the forests can earn sustainable livelihoods while slowing the rate of deforestation, the African Development Bank has granted USD50 million to the Central African Forests Commission – COMIFAC – through the Economic Community of Central African States for five years, from 2009 to 2014 for the Support Program to Preserve the Congo Basin Ecosystems. COMIFAC will build the capacity of the organizations that it covers, including the Center for Forest Management, based in Cameroon. It will work to preserve the bio-diversity of the Congo Basin forests' ecosystems, promote sustainable local development for people living in the forest regions by working with them to define adaptation strategies, and manage these activities so that they continue to benefit these communities beyond the life of the project.

