

SUB-REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON FOREST CONVERSION IN THE CONGO BASIN

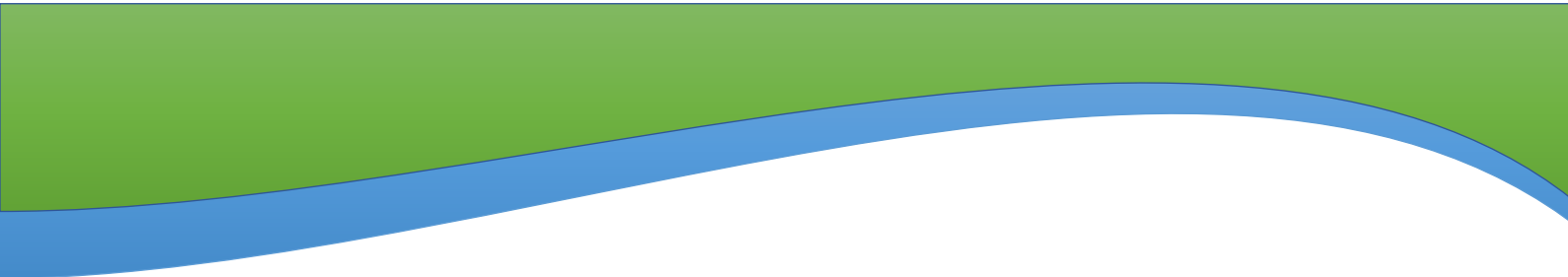
Central theme: Governance and sub-regional cooperation for forest conversion in the Congo Basin

FINAL COMMUNIQUE



Yaounde, from August 18 to 19, 2026

On August 18th and 19th, 2026, Yaounde, Cameroon, hosted the sub-regional workshop on forest conversion in the Congo Basin, organized by Green Development Advocates (GDA), around the central theme: “***Governance and sub-regional cooperation for forest conversion in the Congo Basin.***” This meeting provided a forum for dialogue, analysis, and consultation among the main stakeholders concerned with the future of the Congo Basin's forests, in order to better understand the dynamics of conversion, identify governance challenges, and



develop joint actions to strengthen the protection of forests, ecosystems, and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.

More than one hundred participants from Cameroon, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo took part in the work. They included representatives of public administrations, sub-regional institutions, technical and financial partners, civil society organizations, international NGOs, researchers and academics, as well as representatives of indigenous peoples and local communities.

The main components of this forum were a protocol phase, plenary sessions, group work, and a closing phase.

The opening ceremony was marked by two key moments: a tribute to the founder of GDA, Robinson DJEUKAM, and a welcome address by its Coordinator, Aristide CHACGOM FOKAM. This formal phase also served to highlight the dual nature of the gathering: the celebration of GDA's fifteen years of existence and the commemoration of the ten years since the passing of its founder.

The plenary sessions, comprised of sixteen presentations, were organized around the following five thematic sessions:

- The session on the overall framework of the concept of forest conversion in the Congo Basin and presentation of the study on the loss of primary forests (2015-2024) enabled participants to understand the general framework of forest conversion and the evolution of losses and gains of forest cover in the sub-region.
- The session on the situation of forest conversion in the different countries of the Congo Basin provided an opportunity to examine the political and legal context, recent trends in forest conversion, the challenges and opportunities for action encountered, as well as the environmental, social and economic impacts.
- The session on strengthening policies and regional coordination provided an overview of the coherence of sub-regional forest policies and the contribution of external policies, particularly European ones (FLEGT VPA, Forest Partnership and EUDR).
- The session dedicated to monitoring and accountability for forest conversion cases highlighted the growing importance of technological tools and independent monitoring mechanisms in preventing and documenting forest conversion. Presentations focused on Global Nature Watch, the Standardized System for Independent External Observation (SNOIE), the Open Timber Portal – Independent Observation (OTP-OI), and advocacy campaigns.
- The final session focused on the funding mechanisms needed to support actions related to forest conservation. Discussions highlighted the importance of existing initiatives,

including CAFI, REPALEAC FUND, ECJ-FUND, GGF, and FPC-CLUA, as well as the specific role of funding for environmental journalism by the PULITZER CENTER.

However, participants highlighted the fact that local organizations, indigenous peoples and communities continue to face significant challenges in accessing funding, particularly due to complex procedures, the low flexibility of existing mechanisms and insufficient long-term funding.

Four groups (IPLCs, CSOs, PTFs, administrations and sub-regional institutions) were formed to conduct specific reflections and propose joint actions aimed at strengthening the fight against forest conversion in the Congo Basin.

At the end of the work, the participants formulated the following recommendations:

To the Congo Basin States

1. Continue the development and implementation of domestic laws recognizing the specific needs of indigenous peoples in the Congo Basin;
2. Continue development efforts based on integrated land-use planning by accelerating the development, finalization and participatory implementation of transparent, participatory and coherent land-use plans across sectors;
3. Recognizing and valuing traditional knowledge communities in general and indigenous peoples in particular as an integral component of systems for monitoring, conserving and sustainably managing forests;

To sub-regional institutions

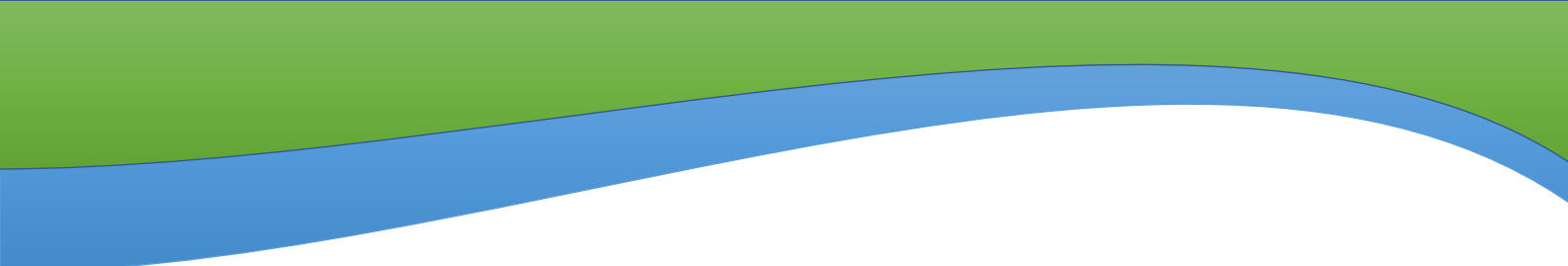
4. Initiate a sub-regional process with a view to developing and adopting a COMIFAC directive dedicated to the prevention and reduction of forest conversion;
5. Revise the directive on the participation of indigenous peoples and non-governmental organizations in the sustainable management of forests in Central Africa;
6. Include a chapter dedicated to forest conversion in future editions of the “State of Central African Forests”;

To the European Union (EU)

7. Ensure that European policies and instruments relating to deforestation-free supply chains, in particular the EU Deforestation and Forestry Directive, are implemented in close dialogue with producing countries, local organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities;

To the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

8. Establish a functional sub-regional observatory on forest conversion including the different countries of the Congo Basin;

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9. Strengthen and institutionalize forest cover monitoring tools
 10. Support indigenous peoples in particular in the revitalization of their traditional knowledge and communities in general in the ecological management of natural resources;
 11. Strengthen collaboration with media and environmental investigative journalists in documenting, raising awareness and fostering public debate on issues related to forest conversion;

To the Technical and Financial Partners and Research (TFP)

12. Significantly increase funding for the prevention of and fight against forest conversion in the Congo Basin;
13. Develop direct, flexible, multi-year financing mechanisms adapted to the realities of indigenous peoples, local communities and local organizations.

Following the discussions, participants acknowledged that forest conversion is a major challenge for governance, development, environmental justice, and human rights in the Congo Basin. They emphasized that addressing this phenomenon requires strengthened sub-regional cooperation, increased data sharing, greater coherence in public policies, and the effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Done in Yaoundé, on August 19, 2026

