Democratic Republic of Congo
An irreplaceable forest titan

Four times the size of California, the Democratic Republic of Congo’s forest cover is second only to that of the Amazon in size and total forest carbon stock. It comprises over half of the Congo Basin, which absorbs 4% of global emissions annually and remains one of the last remaining regions in the world to capture more carbon than it emits.

Though historically a High Forest, Low Deforestation (HFLD) country, the DRC is confronting rising rates of deforestation due to small-scale charcoal production, slash-and-burn agriculture, and expansion of commercial logging and mining industries. The country aims to protect its estimated 85 billion tons of forest carbon from further encroachment with the support of multilateral donor partnerships like the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI), which recently signed an ambitious, $500 million dollar agreement (2021-2031) with the DRC to limit and ultimately reverse forest cover loss. This will enable the DRC to grant at least 5 million hectares of local forest concessions to local communities, to direct industrial agricultural concessions away from high-value forests and peatlands, to map more sustainable agricultural production techniques for cash crops, and to amplify key reforms in the agriculture, energy, and land use planning sectors.

From 2009-2014 the DRC, with the support of UN-REDD and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), embarked on an ambitious REDD+ preparation process that created a National REDD+ Fund, adopted a National REDD+ Strategic Framework, and initiated more than 10 REDD+ pilot projects with demonstrable impacts on biodiversity conservation, emission reduction, and carbon sequestration. The Strategic Framework aims to stabilize and maintain the forest cover of 63.5% of the national territory from 2050 on. This would reduce projected forest emissions by 56% over the period 2015-2030 while increasing the DRC’s gross domestic product.

NDC GOALS

• 8 million hectares of degraded land and forests regenerated
• 5 million hectares of community forests
• 21% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030

Nicolas KAZADI
Minister of Finance

Climate change is one of the macroeconomic challenges facing the global economy in the coming years. Our country has the important assets to provide appropriate solutions thanks to its tropical peatland and tropical forest. These two assets put the country at the forefront of carbon sequestration services and make it the first ecosystem that stores more carbon than it emits.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2016, the first DRC-CAFI partnership enabled the launch of 18 sectoral and integrated projects for major reforms in key sectors of aquaculture, energy, spatial planning, and land use, as well as for measured and verified emission reductions and poverty reduction.
The Pygmies of Africa, believed to be Africa’s oldest human population, were among the first communities to settle in the Congo Basin. Representing an estimated 920,000 people — the majority of whom reside in and comprise the main indigenous peoples of the DRC — these forest communities have historically been greatly threatened by deforestation engendered by logging, land clearance and subsequent evictions. However, landmark pieces of legislation in the past decade have sought to reverse this trend.

**LOCAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

In 2016 the DRC, through Ministerial Decree No. 025, granted local community forest concessions for up to 50,000 hectares of land — ten times the maximum amount authorized in any other country in the region. In 2022, the country adopted its first National Land Rights Policy as well as a law on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Indigenous Pygmy Peoples, both of which aim to improve recognition of Indigenous peoples’ land rights, access to basic social services, and protection of their right to the natural resources they own and occupy.

**A WEALTH OF BIODIVERSITY**

Given that the DRC alone contains over half of Africa’s rainforests, it’s little wonder that it boasts the highest recorded level of biodiversity on the continent. With at least 15,000 plant and animal species, the country has ambitiously committed 30% of its territory to be under some form of protection status by 2030 — more than doubling its 13% baseline in 2020. This milestone would more comprehensively preserve the vast tracts of primary forest which have spared from extinction the nation’s vulnerable and endangered wildlife, including the kapi, Grauer’s gorilla, Congo peacock, and bonobo monkey.

**SPOTLIGHT: SALONGA NATIONAL PARK**

Nestled in the heart of the Congo River Basin, this park — the largest tropical rainforest reserve in Africa and second largest globally — was created in 1970 to protect endemic species such as the Congo peacock and the bonobo monkey, one of humankind’s closest living relatives. Salonga remains critical because it is home to 40% (15,000) of the world’s bonobo population, a threatened species.

**EXPERIENCED IN REDD+ FINANCE**

- In 2018, the DRC became the first country in Africa to sign an Emission Reduction Payment Agreement (ERPA) with the FCPF for the the Mai-Ndombe ER program, paving the way for up to $55 million in results-based payments toward the reduction of 11 MtCO₂ over 5 years.
- More than 50,000 Congolese villagers will receive direct benefits from the project in the form of jobs, schools, health clinics, improved food security, and the redevelopment of native fish stocks.

**SAFEGUARDED BY LEAF**

The LEAF Coalition uses the independent ART/TREES standard, which specifies requirements for the quantification, monitoring, reporting and verification of GHG emission reductions and removals from REDD+ activities at a large jurisdictional scale. In line with the Cancun Safeguards, ART/TREES upholds the right of Indigenous stakeholders to participate in the design and implementation of REDD+ actions.

**SUMMARY**

- **Landmark IPLC Protection**
  - In June 2022, a law to promote and protect the rights and land tenure of indigenous Pygmy peoples was adopted by the senate.

- **REDD+ Readiness**
  - The DRC was the first country in Africa to complete the REDD+ readiness phase and sign a jurisdictional REDD+ agreement with the World Bank.

- **An irreplaceable carbon sink**
  - Massive old-growth tropical forests and peatlands of the Congo Basin are the lungs of the continent and unrecoverable if lost.