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CONGO BASIN NEIGHBORS DRAW ON SHARED EXPERIENCES TO IMPROVE FOREST MONITORING SYSTEMS

Above, Republic of the Congo and Cameroon technical experts exchange lessons learned in creating a National Forest Monitoring System.

The U.S. Forest Service International Programs is supporting the governments of Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of the Congo to improve their national systems to be able to better measure, monitor and report on emissions for forests and other land use sectors.

The multi-U.S. agency SilvaCarbon program, the Department of State Climate Fellows program, and USAID's Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment support the Forest Service's efforts.

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In the Central Africa Congo Basin, national governments are learning from each others' experiences to improve their national forest monitoring systems and qualify for emission reduction payment programs. The programs, like REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation), are global, multi-agency efforts to fight climate change.

The Congo Basin Forest is the second-largest tropical forest in the world. It spans six countries and is teeming with rich animal and plant life. The biodiversity and related ecosystem services it contains direclty supports 75 million people. The carbon its forests absorbs and stores regulates regional climate and has ramifications for global climate change.

In May 2021, the Republic of the Congo signed an Emissions Reduction Purchase Agreement, a legal contract between entities that buy and sell carbon credits. The nation's strong national forest monitoring system was one of the qualifying conditions. Cameroon does not yet have the robust monitoring system. It needs to monitor forest cover change and associated greenhouse gas emissions, and thus qualify to buy and sell carbon credits. But in a move towards meeting these requirements, Cameroon assessed gaps in its forest monitoring system with support from neighboring Republic of the Congo.

In January 2021, members of the Republic of the Congo's National Center for Forest Inventory and Zoning (CNIAF) team worked with Cameroonian technical teams to evaluate four key areas for improving Cameroon's national forest monitoring: institutional arrangements; policy and design decisions; measurement and estimation; and reporting and verification. They used a tool called REDDcompass to guide them through the themes, concepts and actions for development of a National Forest Monitoring System.

"We are benefiting by learning from this process to both complete work that is in progress as well as improve our approach for work that needs to still be completed. Following this workshop, we will continue to work together with all partners to apply everything we have learned here." Timothé Kagonbé - Climate Change Focal Point in the Ministry of Environment, Cameroon and National Coordinator for the NDC, 3rd National Communications and REDD+.

Cameroon is now working to address the gaps identified in the REDDcompass assessment. Going forward, both countries have recognized the value of regional cooperation by learning from each others' experiences and expertise as they work towards strengthening the management and conservation of the Congo Basin forest.

"In this workshop we have had a rich exchange. It has allowed us to learn what others have done… supporting the continual operationalization of both countries' National Forest Monitoring Systems." Destin Loge Lokegna, Data base manager MRV Unit, CNIAF, Republic of the Congo.