

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Office of the Spokesman

For Immediate Release
2009/974

September 29, 2009

MEDIA NOTE

U.S. Department of State Highlights 10 Years of Congo Basin Forest Partnership

Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Maria Otero led a roundtable discussion on the Congo Basin Forest Partnership on September 29, 2009, which featured Heads of State from several Central African countries, prominent conservationists, and representatives of the business community. Assistant Secretary Dr. Kerri-Ann Jones for the Bureau of Oceans, International Environmental and Scientific Affairs also briefed Congress at a bicameral caucus hearing on the Partnership to highlight the U.S. government's contributions to conserving the world's second largest rainforest. The United States government has invested more than \$100 million in funds and technical expertise into the Partnership over the last ten years.

The Congo Basin Forest Partnership constitutes an international association of more than forty governments, international organizations, private sector and civil society representatives and is designed to enhance the sustainable management of the Congo Basin ecosystem. The Partnership promotes economic development, poverty alleviation, and effective governance through the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources, including forests and wildlife. It serves as a global model of public/private cross-boundary cooperation and has resulted in improved sustainable forest management, new multi-national, anti-poaching initiatives and a declining rate of biodiversity loss for a rainforest area larger than Texas.

By the end of 2009, through the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE), U.S. programs have improved land management of 56 million hectares; trained nearly 25,000 people in conservation; put in place ten forestry, biodiversity, and conservation laws; allocated \$2.5 million in small grants to local NGOs; provided for logging concession monitoring in Cameroon, Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); and completed a logging title conversion process in the Democratic Republic of Congo, with additional support from the World Bank and the European Union.

Established at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Partnership operates within the framework of the Council of Ministers in charge of the Forests of Central Africa (COMIFAC) (www.comifac.org/) and in accordance with its strategic plan, the Plan de Convergence. The Partnership focuses on 12 ecologically sensitive and biologically diverse areas and wildlife corridors called forest landscapes, which are viewed as the most vulnerable to deforestation and other threats to biodiversity. Together, these landscapes comprise more than 80 million hectares of critically important tropical forest in Central Africa.

Other U.S. agencies that have invested in the Congo Basin Forest Partnership include the U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

###