

**Dirk Niebel, Member of the German Parliament and
German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation
and Development**

Speech at COP 15 United Nations Climate Change Conference,
Copenhagen; Side Event held by the Central African Forest Commission
(COMIFAC):

"Development of REDD initiative in Central Africa: opportunities and
challenges"

Protecting the forests of the Congo Basin:

A joint task for the riparian countries and industrialised nations

Copenhagen, 11 December 2009

Check against delivery!

Key messages:

1. Conserving the forests is an effective means of protecting the climate
2. Germany is supporting regional cooperation in the Congo Basin and thus making an exemplary contribution to climate protection

President Bizot
Executive Secretary Goma,
Ministers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I come from a country where our **forests mean a great deal** to us. Many of you can say the same.

Just under a third of our Earth is covered in forests.

And those forests are home to three-quarters of the biodiversity of life.

The destruction of the forests causes 20% of global CO₂ emissions.

That is more greenhouse gas than is emitted by the entire European Union!

And that is why it is the forest-rich countries that are in fact amongst the major producers of greenhouse gas in the world (Brazil is ranked 4th).

The Congo Basin has not so far been one of the major emitters. And in order to keep it that way, we want to conserve the forests.

So our meeting is one of the most important at this UN conference on climate change!

Our aim is to move forward the relevant political solutions.

In this important area, we can win one of the victories needed for the lasting protection of the climate.

We owe you, President Bizot, special thanks for having brought us here together today and inviting us to get down to work.

We are constantly being told: climate protection costs money. But we know: *failing* to protect the climate will cost much more money.

Forest protection is one of the most efficient, economical and sustainable instruments for achieving the 2 degree target.

If we fail to act now, we will end up with no option but to *react*.

At this point, we still have the freedom to make use of smart instruments. And it is because I value the freedom to be in control of one's own actions that I want to avoid climate change taking control of us.

My country's government has put protection of the rainforests right at the top of its agenda.

It is my ministry that plays the key role in combating climate change. There are three good reasons for that:

1. 98 per cent of those who have already been affected by climate-related disasters live in developing countries – and have themselves done least to cause climate change.
2. 90% of additional emissions between now and 2050 will occur in the developing countries and emerging economies.
3. Forests support 1.6 billion people and 2000 indigenous peoples. They generate jobs, export income and tax revenue. By protecting the forests we are, not least, also contributing to poverty reduction.

Germany is pressing for **REDD+** to be made part of the agreement negotiated here at Copenhagen.

Thus all measures whose additionality in climate terms has been proven should be included.

I am pleased that a broad international consensus is emerging in this respect.

We have supported the countries of the Congo Basin in the negotiations.

Now it is a question of **negotiating and implementing the details.**

COMIFAC and the common forest strategy that has been adopted are evidence of the skills and leadership that are now so crucial.

The application of sustainable forest management best practices in some of your ten member countries serves as an **example** that other regions can follow **in implementing REDD measures.**

Germany is conscious of the importance of this regional cooperation initiative. That is why we are providing considerable funding in support of the COMIFAC Executive Secretary and the implementation of the Convergence Plan at regional level and, in selected countries, national level.

Germany has taken on the role of facilitator of the international Congo Basin Forest Partnership for two years. I see it as a positive example of efficient support for regional initiatives. I myself am planning to visit the region this coming January.

Regional cooperation can only function if **every member state lives up to its responsibility in supporting COMIFAC.**

The governments of the member states must be as actively involved in framing regional forest policy as they are in implementing it at national level.

It is also vital to have reliable funding for the organisation's activities and structures.

I would like to ask you all to join forces in urging your finance ministers and heads of state to press for COMIFAC to be given a **financing mechanism of its own.**

President, Executive Secretary, ladies and gentlemen,

It is in this spirit that we will be pleased to continue to support COMIFAC's work and your governments' efforts to conserve natural resources.

I have three children.

What I hope this conference will achieve is that one day our grandchildren will say:

our grandparents were at Copenhagen. They talked there about the climate, the forests and the Congo Basin.

And they laid the foundations for something we are still benefiting from today. We are proud of that.

And so, on that note, I would like to wish you, and us, all the best for COMIFAC's work.

4500 Zeichen/ 7 Minuten