



Republic of Congo



**Address by Her Excellency Ms. Rosalie Matondo, Minister of Forest Economy,
Ambassador for the Brazzaville Roadmap on Community-based Forestry in Central
Africa**

**During the opening session of the side event on the theme of
"Sustainable forest management and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
in Africa"
at the Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development
(TICAD-7)**

**Yokohama, Japan
Wednesday, August 28, 2019**

**Mr. Director General of the African Development Bank (AfDB),
Mr. Executive Director of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO),
Mr. Director General of the Japan Forestry Agency,
Mr. Representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA),
Distinguished guests at the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African
Development,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am particularly honored to have been invited, in my capacity as Ambassador for the Brazzaville Roadmap on Community-based Forestry in Central Africa, to take part in this great gathering at the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD-7), and to seize the opportunity of this side event, organized on the theme of: **“Sustainable Forest Management and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 in Africa”**, and to contribute to addressing the issue of sustainable forest management and SDGs in Africa in general and Central Africa in particular.

Therefore, please allow me first to congratulate the organizers of this side event and to thank the Executive Director of the International Tropical Timber Organization for this initiative, which offers me an invaluable opportunity to raise the voices of the people I am representing here, in order to advocate for a more effective community-based and participatory forestry system in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

Indeed, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, the forests of the Congo Basin in Central [Africa](#) constitute the second-largest tropical forest after the [Amazon rainforest](#). It covers more than 268 million hectares and is shared between six countries, Cameroon, the Central [African](#) Republic, the [Republic of](#) Congo, the [Democratic Republic of](#) Congo, [Gabon](#) and Equatorial [Guinea](#). To date, it has one of the lowest deforestation rates in Africa and in the world: some 0.15 percent per year.

The Commission for Central African Forests, known by the acronym COMIFAC, whose mission is to harmonize and monitor forestry policies and legislation in the geographical area of the countries of Central Africa, coordinates national policies through convergence plans for sustainable forest ecosystem management. The first plan, which operated between 2000 and 2014, made it possible to guide COMIFAC countries towards forest management, certification, timber traceability, and afforestation of areas for biodiversity conservation, taking local populations into account while carrying out sustainable forest management and reforestation.

In the period 2015-2025, we are giving priority to the governance of the forestry sector, the further processing of timber within our national territories, and the strengthening of participatory forestry.

The operational objectives related to participatory forestry are, on the one hand, the promotion of decentralized - yet responsible and sustainable - community-based management of forest resources, and on the other hand, building the capacity of

vulnerable communities living in and around concessions and protected areas to ensure their active participation in the management of forestry resources. It is with this in mind that the so-called Brazzaville Roadmap has been developed, the result of collective work facilitated by FAO and the NGO *Nature+*, which I monitor, and the raising of awareness in all the COMIFAC countries, in accordance with my mandate.

Many other initiatives have been undertaken by the countries of the Congo Basin. In the case of Congo, I can quote:

- the mechanism for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, which will today result in the first carbon credits and the funding of the Investment Plan *D+* by the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI);
- The Voluntary Partnership Agreement (APV-FLEGT) signed between our country and the European Union, which will enable the documentation of industry-related information for better governance of the sector through the monitoring of legality, traceability and taxation.

Accordingly, I would like to take the opportunity of this side event to call for the collaboration of various partners in the implementation of all these initiatives, which, I remind you, are in line with the 2030 Agenda relating to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially relating to addressing climate change, the sustainable management of natural resources, the impacts on our living environment, and the livelihoods of local communities.

The objectives mentioned above, notwithstanding their relevance, cannot be achieved while there remain so many constraints, divergent visions, and lack of awareness among the stakeholders involved in the utilization of natural resources in our respective countries.

This is why, with the strengths inherent in their geographical area, the countries of Central Africa have chosen eight priorities to achieve the objectives they have set for themselves. With the permission of the parties I represent, I would like to share here three of these objectives, whose realization cannot prosper without the involvement and participation of various and varied partners, many of whom are present in this room. These include:

- Promoting innovative technologies and endogenous know-how;
- Facilitating entrepreneurship in participatory forestry initiatives;
- Strengthening the capacity of actors involved in providing guidance to local communities and indigenous peoples.

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the saying goes: *“Help yourself, and heaven will help you”*. Indeed, what is the benefit of partners if there is no place for our own contribution? How can we expect support from partners if the real situation in the States involved in the Brazzaville Roadmap is not amongst the most motivational?

Although acting as Ambassador for the Brazzaville Roadmap on Community-based Forestry in Central Africa, it is my duty to enlighten this august assembly on the actual situation in my country, Congo, in terms of progress recorded in terms of sustainable and participatory forest management, in order to reassure partners that their contribution is indeed bringing results in the countries receiving their multifaceted support.

Over the past two decades, the Republic of Congo has listed forest management as a basis for the sustainable management of forest ecosystems. This development process is eminently participatory inasmuch as local communities and indigenous peoples express themselves, through socio-economic studies and the meeting for the adoption of the development plan, when it comes to defining the limits of concession-based areas allocated to community development for the enhancement of their agro-pastoral activities. In the same vein, concession holders are required to pay the sum of 200 CFA francs per cubic meter being commercialized into a fund to support the implementation of community development projects. The regulations also provide for the return of 5 percent of ecotourism revenues in protected areas to local communities and indigenous peoples for the same purpose. The new forestry law currently being adopted consolidates these principles of informed and prior free consent and provides for the local marketing of a proportion of gathered wild products, a measure that is not included in current legislation. Our constant concern to support these local community initiatives is manifested in, among other things, the development of a toolbox, a document listing the majority of income-generating activities that may be carried out for and by rural communities, with a view to creating small forestry businesses and improving their income and quality of life.

All these initiatives indicate the willingness of the rulers of our sub-region in seeking to achieve the transparent and participatory management of Central African forest resources.

Thus, today more than ever, we must opt for an inclusive management of natural resources, taking into account all the stakeholders in community-based forests, around forest logging concessions, or biodiversity conservation concessions.

The principle of the management of these concessions and the certification of forests is a guarantee of the recognition and consideration of rural communities and indigenous peoples in the sharing of the benefits associated with the utilization of forest resources.

Henceforth, women can no longer be forgotten or sidelined. To this end, I am pleased to note that Congo, my country, is one of the three countries in the Congo Basin selected by the ITTO, alongside Cameroon and Gabon, as part of the implementation of the action plan drawn up by the Promotion Committee for Global Green Supply Chains (CAMV/GGSC) further to the China Initiative. The fact-finding missions carried out in the Republic of Congo, from 27 February to 5 March 2019 and on 3 June 2019, reassure us in more ways than one of the determination of our partners to support us in achieving our objectives.

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After this brief overview, all that remains is for me to wish the greatest success to this session of the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development, and invite all of you to seize this opportunity for fruitful exchanges, with a view to win-win international cooperation, which impacts the development of our nations and the lives of our people, and which also allows us to better identify our priorities and our needs, and thus carry out, on an inclusive basis, our policies, plans, programmes and forestry-related projects in general, and community-based and participatory forestry in particular. So, let us make local communities and indigenous peoples key players in the sustainable management of our forest ecosystems in order to combat climate change and inequality.

Finally, may I reassure you from this rostrum of the unwavering will of the Government of the Republic of Congo, despite the adverse effects of the global financial crisis, to fulfill as far as is possible all obligations with regard to the ITTO, in order to recover its rights within this Organization, suspended since the forty-third Session of the International Tropical Timber Council (ITTC).

Long live International Cooperation!

Long live the 7th Session of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development!

Long live the International Tropical Timber Organization!

Thank you.