

# Independent Technical Review: Republic of Congo National Programme Document

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UN-REDD PROGRAMME

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Reviewer: Thomas LEGRAND

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## **General comments to National Programme Document of Republic of Congo (maximum 200 words):**

The document is of good quality, and provides enough robust and coherent basis to finance and launch the activities. This should be expected as it is the results of two years of preparation in the framework of the REDD+ process and builds on the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) already approved by the FCPF, to which it adds significant improvements on different issues that are easily traceable. Government's ownership seems good as demonstrated by the validation process, the coherence with national strategies and policies and the governance structures. While the consultation, participation and engagement of civil society and indigenous people in the REDD+ process has initially proved to be difficult in the Republic of Congo, substantial efforts have been made to improve it, leading to the strengthening of their representation and organization, and are considered in this programme. The approach (organization of work, coordination of actors, decentralization...), activities and budget considered in this programme ensure a reasonable likelihood of success for achieving the expected results in a cost-efficient and participative manner, while promoting and protecting rights of local communities and indigenous people. It is consistent with the UN-REDD Programme Framework Document and Strategy and compliant with UN-REDD Programme Rules of Procedure and Operational Guidance. Nevertheless some clarifications and improvements shall be made to the document or considered during the implementation of the activities. They relate especially to the budget's presentation, the interrelations between activities, involvement of stakeholders in operational actions and on how the potential lack of necessary complementary funding could impact or not the achievement of the programme's expected results.

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## Assessing the National Programme Document against review criteria

(Please refer to the TORs and supporting documents)

### 1. Ownership of the Programme (maximum 200 words):

This document is the result of an extensive preparation process. Government's ownership seems good as demonstrated by the validation process (final statement of the workshop involving more than 100 participants enclosed), the coherence with national strategies and policies and the governance structures and the government's contribution (of which the in-kind part should be stated clearly).

Indeed, this report is built on the previously validated Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) already approved by the FCPF and refers also to national strategies and policies such as the APV-FLEGT, the promotion of sustainable forest management, the PRONAR, the norms for environmental and social impacts assessment... More details could be given on how the preliminary strategic options are already considered or not in sectorial/national strategies and on how the REDD+ process would fit in a low-carbon/ climate-resilient / green economy development strategy.

Governance structures are designed so as to ensure the ownership of the program by all relevant stakeholders, including at the regional level (cf. CODEPA-REDD+) and from a broad range of sectors (cf. representation of Ministries in the CONA-REDD+).

The ownership by Indigenous people and civil society has been actively promoted through substantial efforts especially in the strengthening and structuring of their internal organizations which led to the creation of the CACO-REDD+. Given their initial weaknesses, this will receive particular attention during the implementation of this programme.

Although the ownership of the REDD+ process may be strengthened further through consultation, capacity-building - especially on the most technical issues (example: MRV) - and engagement in operational work, the programme reflects on the whole specific national stands (example: safeguards, preliminary strategic options...).

The document would benefit from stating more explicitly the composition of the drafting team.

### 2. Level of consultation, participation and engagement:

This programme is the result of some 2 years of preparation in the framework of the REDD+ process. Initially, the consultation, participation and engagement of civil society and indigenous people in the REDD+ process has proved to be difficult in the Republic of Congo. Through the REDD+ process, a strong investment in consultations, the strengthening of their internal organization and the structuring of the CACO-REDD+ seem to have allowed a fair level of consultation, participation and engagement in the design and validation process (final statement of the workshop involving more than 100 participants enclosed) of the programme, especially when considering initial situation. However, it is difficult to assess precisely the participation to the validation workshop of some stakeholders (private sector, banking sector or international NGOs for example) and it is not written to what extent the general comments of the validation workshop will be taken into account in the implementation.

Considering the initial situation, substantive budgets have been planned for an IEC campaign, the promotion of dialogue at different levels and some participative technical consultations. Participation, promotion and protection of local communities and indigenous people rights are also

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actively promoted not only through the adequate governance structured but also in the main REDD+ strategic options (cf. protected areas, land tenure, sustainable forest management...), implementation and monitoring frameworks (safeguards, independent observatory, online national monitoring system...). During the implementation of the program, the different governance structures should be established as soon as possible and it should be precisely thought out how the different stakeholders would be involved in each operational activities. A more comprehensive stakeholder analysis (than in the R-PP) could also help for the implementation.

### 3. Programme effectiveness and cost efficiency :

The programme's effectiveness and cost-efficiency is supported by various elements. First, it is built on the R-PP, to which some improvements have been made. It builds also on lessons learnt at the international level, especially in its neighbor the DRC, while taking into account national specificities. Furthermore, collaboration and coordination between the different actors including partnerships, have been well thought out and built on comparative advantages. The decentralization should also prove to be a particularly effective option and the small grants programme a very cost-efficient one.

To fully ensure the achievement of objectives at the lowest cost, some precisions should be added:

- The document should clarify how the potential lack of necessary complementary funding would not jeopardize the expected result of the programme (especially for the 4a component) and which are the target sources for these funds?
- Table 4 and 5 should be deleted as they include some mistakes and the table p 73-77, on which I have based this review, presents a budget with enough details.

During the implementation, the synergies and necessary coordination between different activities should be considered (see suggestions) and some improvements/clarifications should be made on the following issues: prospective study, the "cellules départementales" and the "animateurs REDD+" (see suggestions).

### 4. Management of risks and likelihood of success:

The main risks are well identified and adequately managed (to the extent possible) so that it ensures a reasonable likelihood of success.

- The potential lack of institutional and technical capacity and the potential weakness of stakeholder's organizations have been well addressed through an important budget for capacity building, consultation and information with a certain level of flexibility. This should enable to conduct adequately the work, have an adequate dialogue around REDD+, build a common vision among actors and promote good governance, although it cannot be fully guaranteed given the initial situation of weak representations of civil society and indigenous people.
- The risk of the REDD+ process being a long, intangible and abstract one with few actions implemented on the ground has been tackled by the technical and financial (small grants programme) support to pilot projects and by decentralizing the REDD+ process.
- The potential risk of missing political support and the adequate cross-sectoral coordination within multiple government agencies have been tackled through the composition of the CONA-REDD and the alignment of the REDD+ processes with national priorities. However, during the implementation of the programme, a clearer view on how different government agencies will be involved in the operational work could help ensure a good cross-sectoral coordination which has proved a crucial issue in others countries. Much of the necessary information for this is already in the R-PP.

More information is necessary on the risk of failing to achieve the expected results of the programme due to the lack of necessary complementary funding (especially for the 4a

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component)and if necessary on the ways to mitigate it. However, funding seems to be reasonable for this component.

Table 3 (p. 50) is not necessary in this document and should be improved when developing the preliminary strategic options.

5. Consistency with the UN-REDD Programme Framework Document and Strategy :

The approach is in line with the guiding principles of collaboration: it respected the five inter-related principles of the UNDG, it builds on each UN agency 's comparative strengths, relevant partnerships are facilitated, and a strong focus on coordination of actors and of promoting rights-based and participative approaches within the country has been promoted. While taking into account national specificities, it also builds on best practices and efforts realized abroad. Activities forecast in the programme are in line with UN-REDD programme work areas while respecting the division of work between each UN agency.

6. Compliance with UN-REDD Programme Rules of Procedure and Operational Guidance

Governance structures (ensuring the representation of indigenous and forest dependent people in CONA-REDD+ and women), consultation processes (including SESA), implementation framework design (preliminary strategic options, benefit-sharing mechanisms safeguards...) , and monitoring framework (independent observatory, online national monitoring system...) takes well into account the issue of participation, promotion and protection of the rights of local communities and indigenous people. As the national context has been characterized by the lack of organization of civil society and indigenous people, substantial investments have been planned for these activities, in order to be able to comply with UN-REDD Programme Operational Guidance. Nevertheless the respect of the operational guidance, especially regarding the necessary adherence to the principle of free, prior and informed consent should be monitored closely during the implementation of the programme, as it is the only way to fully ensure it.

Formal processes have been respected (consultation, country-led formulation, assistance from the UN Country Team and Participating UN Organizations' technical teams, validation meeting with proceedings attached, process for submission, building on the R-PP which is attached to the document...).

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## Suggestions for improving the technical design of the National Programme

### Document of Republic of Congo :

#### Improvements/clarifications do be included in the document

- More information is necessary to explain how the potential lack of necessary complementary funding would not jeopardize the expected result of the programme (especially for the 4a component) and from which sources are these funds expected to be raised (alternative sources such as international NGOs or private sector could also be considered).
- Table 4 and 5 should be deleted. Mismatches with the table p 73-77 relate to the following fields : “coordination des activités et publications”, “appui a la CNIAF”, « développement des capacités /formations », « cofinancement à trouver / développement du niveau de référence », « grand total / composante 3 », « total UN-REDD / composante 3 », Gérer et améliorer la conduite du suivi du changement du couvert forestier », “ Gérer et améliorer la conduite de l'IFN », « conseiller MRV international », « grand total / composante 4/4a) ».
- Government’s in-kind contributions and the sources of the existing cofinancing should be made more explicit.
- In the table p 73-77, the period (years) for each activities should be completed.
- Table 3 (p. 50) is not necessary.
- The report (or the proceeding) should specify more clearly the participation for each main stakeholders at the validation workshop (completion of the acronym list can also help) and to what extent the general comments will be taken into account.
- The document should specify the composition of its drafting team.
- The list of acronyms should be completed.
- More details could be given on how the preliminary strategic options are already considered or not in sectorial/national strategies.
- Some details on how the REDD+ strategy would fit in a low-carbon/ climate-resilient / green economy development strategy and on the government’s plans for a “green economy” would be welcomed.
- Is the disclaimer p 2 relevant for this document, when referring to the R-PP?

#### To be considered during the implementation

- The different governance structures should be established as soon as possible.
- It should be precisely thought out how the different stakeholders and public agencies would be involved in each operational activities in order to guarantee the REDD+ process to be really inclusive and cross-sectoral. Most of this information is already in the R-PP.
- A more comprehensive (than in the R-PP) stakeholder analysis (with the specific names of organizations) could also help for the implementation.
- The report should specify when possible the relevant synergies and necessary coordination between different activities/ preliminary strategic options, especially between the design of the reference (emissions) level and the national, the design of the development strategy and vision (Congo 2025) and the design of the National Land-Use Plan (PNAT); and between preliminary strategic options 2 and 4.
- The prospective study (p. 5) should include some elements of scenario “business as-usual” for the evolution of forest cover, mobilizing available outputs from the work on the design of a reference (emissions) level.
- Table 3 (p. 50) is not necessary in this document and should be improved when developing the preliminary strategic options. Risks should be explicitly stated (OS 1 is more about how to mitigate them) well-defined (OS 3 is just the risk of not achieving the expected result), fully identified (, i.e. May the rise of agriculture’s profitability increase deforestation? May land tenure security increase deforestation and

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degradation ?) and not focused only on leakage. The links between mitigation actions and risks could be made clearer (OS 2, OS4 for green economy) and the mitigation actions completed (cf. agroforestry for OS 4, and mitigation actions for new risks identified).

- Choice criterias of the 3 regions (“départements”) for the implementation of regional REDD+ units (“cellules départementales”) and the prospects for implementing them in others regions should be thought out.
- How would the “animateurs REDD+” be recruited? What are their profiles? How many of them? What would be their relations with the regional multipartners platforms and with the CODEPAs?
- The respect of the operational guidance, especially regarding the necessary adherence to the principle of free, prior and informed consent should be monitored closely during the implementation of the programme, as it is the only way to fully ensure it.