

Protecting the “Lungs of the world”

Japanese contribution will promote sustainable use of Congo Basin forest

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THE SECOND LARGEST FOREST IN THE WORLD

In 1999, Central African leaders met and discussed protecting and utilizing forest resources in Central Africa. As a result, the Commission of Central African Forests (COMIFAC), headquartered in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, was founded in 2005 by ten countries in the region. Central Africa has the Congo Basin forest, which is the second largest forest in the world after the Amazon in land area, and the countries in the region working in concert for the protection and sustainable use of the forest resources is increasingly important. COMIFAC monitors and gives guidance on activities related to the forests and the environment in this region.



ing the needs of all the people. Fighting against poverty and unemployment, finding energy sources other than firewood and developing farming methods that improve the food supply level with less damage to the forests will slow down the expanding destruction of Central Africa’s forest resources.

TECHNOLOGY FOR THE BETTER USE OF FORESTS

Japan has taken forest inventories in three COMIFAC nations so far and would like this work to be continued in the other seven nations as well. The professional training of Geographic Information System (GIS) image analysts in Central Africa is something that Japan would display its strength in. Financial and material support for

Although the Congo Basin forest has rich biodiversity, it has been affected by human activities such as land reclamation in response to growing demand for food. Irrational and uncontrolled deforestation, including slash-and-burn farming, seriously threatens the conservation of the Congo Basin forest. Additionally, degradation of the forest resources is accelerated by increasing production of commercial crops, utilization of forest and mineral resources, and construction of transportation infrastructure and hydroelectric dams.

To manage the effects from forest-related activities, assessing the forest resources in the region through a forest inventory is necessary. Then we must create a detailed map so that we can draw up plans for appropriate forest use while consider-

our expanding work will also be valuable help for COMIFAC to fulfill its duties.

As the world’s second largest forest, the Congo Basin forest has played and will continue to play an important role in addressing global warming. However, Japan’s aid for Africa has not emphasized forests and the environment over a long period of time. Japan must move in step with other countries, sharing the awareness that conservation of the Congo Basin forest must be done by the ten COMIFAC nations and the entire international community. With this in mind, we expect Japan to assist Central African countries both financially and technically in the protection and sustainable use of the Congo Basin forest.

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Cover: Biodiversity is important for the forest. Cutting down trees put many species in peril.
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Photo on pages 2-3:
People plant trees together in Burkina Faso ©Akio Iizuka



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