

The new European Union Budget: What's in it for tropical forests and local livelihoods?

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Room A3H-1

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Opening Remarks

- Honourable Members,
- Son Excellence Madame la Ministre Rosalie Matondo,
- Distinguished guests,

- It is also my pleasure to welcome you to this meeting.

- Let me first of all thank the three Members of Parliament, Ms Maria Arena, Ms Lola Sanchez Caldentey and Ms Heidi Hautala for hosting today's event. Let me also thank FERN with whom we have been co-organising the event.

- As most of you are surely aware, this event is taking place back-to-back with the 18th Meeting of the Congo Basin forest partnership. During this high-level meeting, partners have committed once again to address the challenges of the second largest tropical rainforest in the world and in particular the issue

of livelihood of forest-dependent people through sustainable forest management.¹

- Forests have always been of great importance to indigenous people and to local communities in the Central African region. Local people depend on forests resources for various needs such as food, fuel wood, construction materials, medicine, and for income generation.
- Therefore, the participation of local communities is essential in any forest conservation effort.
- Over the past 40 years, particular attention has been directed towards strengthening the capacity of local communities, to manage forests in a sustainable manner. FAO conducted reviews on the status of community-based forestry in 1990, 2001 and 2016.
- The review in 2016 demonstrated that community-based forestry remains a powerful tool for shifting towards sustainable forest management while at the same time also bringing significant improvements to local livelihoods.
- Over the last years, FAO has been working with partners to assist countries to ensure the success of their communities depending on forests, in the framework of the SDGs.

¹ In the so-called "Brussels Declaration", one of the main outcomes of this meeting.

- In the Congo Basin for example, actions taken this year have allowed to develop the “Brazzaville Roadmap” for strengthening community-based forestry.
- In this regard, let me reiterate FAO’s gratitude to Her Excellency Rosalie Matondo, Minister of the Forest Economy of the Republic of Congo, for her efforts in championing the Brazzaville Roadmap.
- Now the focus must be directed towards translating this roadmap into action. Countries need the support of technical partners and donors in facing this challenge.
- Today’s panel is intended :
 - to promote dialogue between the EU and forested countries on support to forest dependent people, particularly in the Congo Basin region;
 - to refine our understanding on the potential of forests to contribute to climate change mitigation and enhance livelihoods.
- Before I hand over the floor to Ms. Arena, let me also take this opportunity to invite you to a High-level Conference FAO is jointly organizing with MEP Benedek Javor, MEP Heidi Hautala and other Members of Parliament on 7 February 2019 on the contributions of forests to sustainable development, where we hope to continue the discussion.
- Thank you very much for your attention and I look forward to an interesting debate.