

## Presentation of the One Forest Summit, in Libreville on March 1 and 2, 2023

### → Why dedicate a summit to forests?

As announced by President of the Gabonese Republic Ali Bongo Ondimba and President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron during COP27 in November 2022 in Sharm el-Sheikh, a One Forest Summit will be organized on March 1 and 2, 2023 in Libreville, Gabon.

This summit will be a key moment to move forward on climate action and the preservation of biodiversity, by promoting solidarity between the three major forest basins on a global scale: the Amazon Forest, the Congo basin and the tropical forests of Southeast Asia. The protection of these three forest basins is a global issue. By sequestering hundreds of millions of tons of CO<sub>2</sub><sup>1</sup>, these forest basins play a critical role in climate regulation. They are home to exceptional flora and fauna and invaluable treasures of biodiversity. Furthermore, by acting as buffers between human societies and the microbial cycles of the wild areas, they play a key role in preventing the emergence of new epidemics.

### → Why hold a Summit in Gabon?

Gabon, whose territory is 88% covered by the equatorial forest, located in one of the two main green lungs of the planet, is on the front line of the fight against global warming and the protection of biodiversity, two priorities which have long been at the top of the national policy agenda. A forerunner, Gabon has also voluntarily committed to protecting one third of its natural areas, both terrestrial and marine. Preparing for the post-oil era for more than a decade, Gabon has adopted an economic model that combines industrial development and sustainable management of its natural resources, as demonstrated by the exploitation of wood, of which Gabon is one of the world's leading producers.

### → What will be the objectives and tangible advancements at this Summit?

This Summit, which will bring together heads of state and ministers from all continents, will address issues related to the preservation of the three major forest basins, following the historic agreement reached in Montreal on the protection of biodiversity.

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<sup>1</sup> Forests are the world's second largest carbon sink after the oceans: they absorb twice as much CO<sub>2</sub> as they emit. On a global scale, the Global Forest Watch estimates that they absorb a net amount of 7.6 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year.

The protection of forests is sometimes placed in opposition to the economic development of forest countries, many of which are also subject to strong demographic pressure. The aim of the Summit is to demonstrate that the two objectives are reconcilable: managing a forest in a sustainable way allows both to preserve the ecosystem services to humanity and to increase its economic benefits for forest countries and local populations.

In practical terms, the One Forest Summit in Libreville will not aim to adopt new political declarations. We already have an ambitious framework: it is the one set by the Paris Agreement and then in Glasgow during COP27 as well as in Montreal during COP15. The challenge will be to implement this ambition by offering forest countries, with the help of many scientists, business leaders, investors and NGOs, a platform of scientific and economic solutions to help them to reconcile protection of their forests and economic development.

The first objective will be to provide large forest countries with very concrete solutions to enable them to derive economic benefits from more protective forest policies:

- By developing more sustainable supply chains for products that will be sold at higher prices on international markets and will benefit local populations more. Such industrial fields already exist: for example, sustainably harvested wood products used for construction and renovation of buildings, including the new CLT (Cross-laminated timber) industry, which is an innovative solution to reduce the carbon footprint of our infrastructure. Food products from agroforestry and other responsible practices also have enormous potential: coffee, cocoa, rubber, etc. The challenge is to support these sectors to accompany their scaling up, and to stimulate the demand for these products or materials, in line with the new European policy to fight against imported deforestation. An economic forum for forests will be organized in Libreville to accelerate the development of these sectors, through the sharing of expertise, training, and new opportunities for economic partnerships.
- By remunerating countries that reduce deforestation or reforest and thus increase the sequestration capacity of their forests (REDD+). In this respect, private actors have a key role to play through what we call "carbon credits": in concrete terms, a company that wishes to contribute to the fight against global warming will be able to invest in projects that increase the net sequestration capacity of the forest, through land restoration or reforestation projects for example. To avoid any green washing, we will gather the actors in Libreville who are engaged in the segment of this market with the highest environmental

integrity, and thus brings the most profit to forest countries (with high yield projects, some exceeding 30\$ per ton of CO<sub>2</sub>).

- Finally, some areas of the forest are still intact and represent vital reserves of carbon or biodiversity (e.g. mangroves), which must be protected in the framework of parks or biosphere reserves. The Libreville summit will also allow for the launch of innovative mechanisms to finance these protected areas, through positive conservation partnerships (PCP), following the initiative launched by France and Gabon on the sidelines of COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, as well as the Forest Land Investment Partnerships (FLIP) launched by the United States in Davos in January 2023.

The second objective of this Summit will be to strengthen scientific cooperation between the three major tropical basins of the world, to increase international expertise on the services provided by forests. The links between biodiversity and health will be explored (through the PREZODE initiative), the traditional practices that allow for the protection of endemic species, but also to improve the mapping of these areas, whose ecological wealth remains poorly known. Just as with sea beds, if we want to improve their protection, we must improve our understanding of these ecosystems.

Finally, by organizing it in Libreville, the objective of this Summit will also be to put forward the contribution of African forests, still largely unknown to the public, a few months before the summit on the Amazon, which should be organized by Brazil and Colombia. The Congo-Ogooué Forest basin is an extraordinary lung for the planet. Among the three major forest basins, it has the highest net CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration rate.

In the spirit of the previous One Planet Summits, this summit will not only bring together representatives of states from all continents and international organizations, but also companies and investors, associations, scientists and experts, and local authorities. This plurality of actors is the strength of the One Planet summits. It allows us to mobilize the private sector's resources for the ecological transition and to change practices at all levels.

**The One Forest Summit in Libreville will not be just another summit. It will lead to promoting action and to the wide scale implementation of vital decisions for our planet's future.**