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Ministre de la Coopération

Discussion sur la gestion durable des forêts de la RDC

Washington, samedi 14 avril 2007 : 12h00 à 13h00

Salle 13-121 du World Bank Main Complex.

Discours d'introduction

It is with strong emotion that I co-chair today, with Mister Paul WOLFOWITZ, President of the World Bank, the discussion chaired by HE Mister Didace PEMBE BOKIAGA, Environment Minister of the DRC, on the ambitious reform of the forestry sector initiated by the Congolese authorities in collaboration with the international community.

Since our encounter places itself indeed in the follow-up of the conclusions of the "International Conference On sustainable forest management in the Democratic Republic of the Congo" that took place on 26 and 27 February in Brussels and of which the conclusions have been repeated in a declaration called "Declaration of Brussels".

To reconstitute its context, I recall this conference's objective to reunite all the actors implied in the Congolese forestry sector to take stock of the situation, to think about a sustainable and innovative management of the forests, as well as of appropriate financing mechanisms, so they can become a factor of sustainable human development. The conclusions of the Conference of Brussels are repeated on an internet site, of which I could give you the coordinates if you should wish so.

For your information, and always in the framework of the follow-up of the "Declaration of Brussels", I have also undertaken the necessary steps to put the important dossier of sustainable forest management of the DRC on the agenda of the next G8 summit as well as on the agenda of the next Council of the European Development Cooperation Ministers that will take place in May.

The international context is favourable since the states aware of the challenges regarding global warming, climatic changes, the greenhouse effect and the international challenge in this context of sustainable management of forest spaces, are numerous. This is why I invite you to include our exchanges in the international debates on sustainable management of the tropical forests and on new funding modes of environmental services in the framework of the climatic changes.

The Congolese context is favourable since, on the brink of the third Republic and of the quinquennium of the recently vested government, the Democratic Republic of Congo has initiated a new era, the one of a growing democracy, of responsible governance and of the legitimate state. Besides, it is in this framework that the Parliament adopted the Programme of the Congolese Government 2007-2011 on February 24, 2007, including the principles of the Governance Contract based on the Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy Paper (PRGSP).

In this way, the Congolese government has gotten down to this gigantic working site of the construction of a new Democratic Republic of Congo in which the sustainable management of the forests constitutes one of the essential parameters for the sustainable development of the Congolese populations.

We are therefore gathered here today in first instance to accompany the Congolese government to reach the goals it has set itself.

However, we must not forget that the forests of the DRC that cover 62% of the DRC's national territory and represent alone already 60% of the pluvial forests of the entire Congo River Basin cannot be isolated from the diverse initiatives regarding the forests of the Congo River Basin, but that they need to be, in this context, taken into consideration according to their importance.

The Conference of Brussels has recognized the innovative character of the creation of a Fiduciary Fund for the "Conservation of Nature". The World Bank and UNESCO/WWF are at this moment examining the feasibility of these funds to implement them as soon as possible. The conference has also taken note of the installation of the multi-donor fiduciary Fund "Forest Governance in the DRC" administered by the World Bank, and to which France and the European Commission already contribute.

In this context, I have decided on a first contribution of the Belgian Development Cooperation, for an annual amount of 1.000.000 € towards the two new Fiduciary Funds, the "Conservation concessions" and the "conservation of nature" as well as a financial support of 500.000€ to the Fiduciary Fund "Forest Governance in the DRC".

Some haven't yet decided, but I invite the partners of the Democratic Republic of Congo to consider a support in expertise as well as a budgetary contribution to these different fiduciary funds.

A debate could loom up between us, regarding the need to dispose of diverse funds rather than of one, and I would like to emphasize that in this stadium, whatever the final decision or decisions that will be adopted, we must first of all think of the complementary destinations of the financing that will be administered within these three fiduciary

funds, namely, the forest spaces, protected areas and finally, an increased implication of the private sector or the civil society.

I therefore invite you to think, together, about concrete propositions that will allow the international community to accompany the process of better governance, initiated by the current government of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the sector of sustainable management of the forests in the DRC.

The objectives aimed by our meeting today deserve to be cited completely. Their enumeration is not superfluous since they constitute themselves alone already an action programme.

Our meeting has to :

- Highlight the Brussels Declaration ;*
- Shine a spotlight on Congo Basin forests initiatives ;*
- Stimulate additional support of the multi-donor efforts;*
- Ensure that the forest of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Congo Basin remain in the G8 agenda during the German and Japanese leadership periods ;*
- Demonstrate commitment to promote innovative sustainable forest management and financing models ;*
- Call upon the leaders of the world's economic, scientific and intellectual community to develop and implement a radically new approach to forest conservation, especially in the post-conflict DRC context;*
- Agree that a vision for Congolese Forests should be presented and debated at the Fall 2007 Annual Meeting based on the results of the DFID-led DRC Roundtable review.*

I would like to thank in particular the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the World Bank, as well as all the participants reunited here today to have made this meeting possible.

I wish our short encounter a true success and I hope it will constitute one of the starting points that will allow, in an innovative way, and in the nearest possible future, I hope, an implication of the international community in the efforts of the DRC and of the countries of the Congo River Basin, so that the management of their forests becomes a model that will inspire future generations.