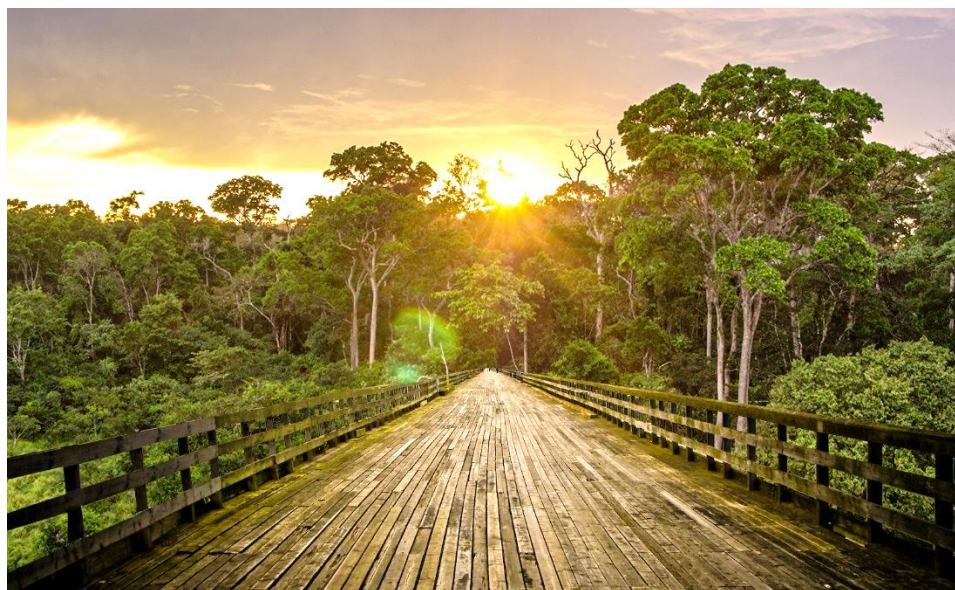


## Forests for all, forever our way forward



**09.11.2021.** The Republic of the Congo has a plan: co-creating solutions together with investors and natural tropical forests, not just for COP26 but well beyond. The way forward at bird's eye view: (1.) *Carbon positive forestry is possible in the Congo Basin.* (2.) *Together, we should compensate Africa's forests.* (3.) *Forest and climate finance should share benefits with host countries and local communities.*

Those are the main highlights from INTERHOLCO's COP26 side event, held today in the Blue Zone and live streamed from the COMIFAC Pavilion. Moderated by Olman Serrano, president of Paris-based NGO ATIBT (International technical tropical wood association, ATIBT in French) in the presence of Rosalie MATONDO, minister of Forest Economy of the Republic of Congo, the event attracted well over 100 participants representing countries, investors, banks, development agencies, international organizations, NGOs and scientists.

Minister Rosalie MATONDO reminded the audience that Africa's Forest ecosystems provide free crucial services to the world. Deforestation in Congo amounts to 0,05% - one of the lowest rates in the world. The Republic of Congo already absorbs 3 times more carbon than it emits. So much so, that our air, water, health and climate all depend on forests. '***For investors, mobilising finance means going a small way to compensating an African country and resident communities so they can continue to produce a positive impact for the planet and Congo,***' affirmed Minister Rosalie MATONDO.

According to Dr. Christian Ruck, Facilitator of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, the Republic of Congo is a country in which forests cover more than 65% of the land – equivalent to Greece and Portugal. '***Private companies that harvest wood according to high ecological and social standards, without impairing the forest, biodiversity or climate, do deserve fiscal incentives,***' he added.

In his message to COP 26, president of the Republic of Congo Denis SASSOU NGUESSO who also chairs the Congo Basin Climate Commission, bringing together 16 countries of Central and East Africa as well as Morocco, affirmed: '***Congo Basin countries provide invaluable services to the world with their ecosystems. But what do we receive in return? Very little. Indeed, industrialized countries, which hold historical responsibility***

*for the deregulation of climate change, are reluctant to mobilize the necessary funding to fulfil their commitments. The great difficulties facing the application of article 6 of the Paris agreement, which commits rich countries to supporting the mitigation and especially adaptation efforts of developing countries, are clear proof.'*

The growing recognition of the role that the great forests of Africa play in climate regulation for the benefit of all humanity, should translate into actions which can bring much needed economic benefits to African communities for whom these forests are home. *'In order to attract a significant financial package, Congo counts on nature-based solutions,'* argued Congolese climate change expert, Georges Claver Boundzanga.

To give back to Africa, public-private partnerships and alliances will be key. Over the years, the Republic of the Congo has developed the conditions for such partnerships, establishing rules and regulations. Private sector actors such as INTERHOLCO, an FSC-certified forest company based in the North of Congo, showcase an economic model that keeps forests alive and gorilla habitats protected: sustainable forest management (SFM). In fact, SFM is much larger than just the forest concession that INTERHOLCO manages and calls for an ALLIANCE joining all sectors. This model can be replicated elsewhere in the world in tropical forests.

*'So how do we do it? First, we need a close and direct cooperation between the private sector, governments and institutions financing development. We all need to pull together in the same direction. Second, we need to facilitate the alignment of financial flows with international goals, and private sector investments need to be aligned behind industry strategies'*, affirmed Ulrich Grauert, INTERHOLCO CEO.

The economic growth of private sector investments into tropical forests, translate locally into funds for communities, taxes to government and support in key infrastructure. The needs of employees and their communities feed a regional and sub-regional market for food, services, transport, and supplies. Forest finance, climate finance, can catalyse much of the needed change, aligning with international goals, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

*'Governments alone cannot solve these problems. Private initiative and capital must be included. Our goal is to prove that this comprehensive business plan and model can be developed and implemented, balancing the fight on climate change and generating economic benefit for all stakeholders involved in our business, including local communities and indigenous peoples,'* affirmed Oscar Crohn from Soltra Capital Investment.

Everyone will benefit – nature, people and planet, as long as each is given a chance. People spanning forest dwellers, communities living in and from the forest, all the way to city inhabitants who have the freedom to surround themselves with healthy, sustainable and durable products from Africa's forests – paving a way forward.

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#### Links to INTERHOLCO's side event

Live stream on 9/11 starting at 10h30: <https://bit.ly/IHC-COP26-Join-Live>

Event outline and programme: <https://bit.ly/IHC-COP26-Info-and-Programme>

Flyer: <https://bit.ly/IHC-COP26-Side-event-flyer>

COP26 Press Release

**To be kept under embargo until 9.11.2021 at 13 hours CET**

#### About INTERHOLCO

INTERHOLCO offers Sustainable Hardwood 'Made in Africa' as a responsible solution to promote better living conditions (construction with wood), reduce climate change, and increase social justice. As FSC-certified producer specialized in producing and trading logs, sawn timber, glued laminated scantlings and other products, INTERHOLCO manages the entire chain, from forest to customers since 1962. Harvesting wood selectively, INTERHOLCO protects 1.1 million hectares of natural forest from permanent conversion to agricultural land, giving 16'000 local inhabitants access to quality basic services and keeping the habitat of thousands of gorillas and elephants.

#### Communications contact INTERHOLCO

Tullia Baldassarri Höger von Högersthal  
INTERHOLCO AG, Neuhofstr. 25, 6340 Baar, Switzerland  
Tel.: +41 (0)41 767 03 82  
E-mail: [media@interholco.com](mailto:media@interholco.com)