

PUBLIC LAW 108-200—FEB. 13, 2004

CONGO BASIN FOREST PARTNERSHIP ACT OF
2004

Public Law 108-200
108th Congress

An Act

Feb. 13, 2004
[H.R. 2264]

Congo Basin
Forest
Partnership Act
of 2004.

To authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2004 to carry out the Congo Basin Forest Partnership program, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Congo Basin Forest Partnership Act of 2004”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The tropical forests of the Congo Basin, located in the Central African countries of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, and Sao Tome/Principe, are second in size only to the tropical forests of the Amazon Basin.

(2) These forests are a crucial economic resource for the people of the Central African region.

(3) Congo Basin forests play a critical role in sustaining the environment—absorbing carbon dioxide, cleansing water, and retaining soil.

(4) Congo Basin forests contain the most diverse grouping of plants and animals in Africa, including rare and endangered species, such as the lowland gorilla, mountain gorilla, chimpanzee, and okapi. These plants and animals are invaluable for many reasons, including their genetic and biochemical information, which could spark advances in medical, agricultural, and industrial technology.

(5) Logging operations, driven by a growing global demand for tropical hardwoods, are shrinking these forests. One estimate has logging taking out Congo Basin forest area at a rate of twice the size of the State of Rhode Island every year.

(6) The construction of logging roads and other developments are putting intense hunting pressure on wildlife. At current hunting levels, most species of apes and other primates, large antelope, and elephants will disappear from the Congo Basin, with some becoming extinct.

(7) If current deforestation and wildlife depletion rates are not reversed, the six countries of the Congo Basin most immediately, but also the world, will pay an immense economic, environmental, and cultural price.

(8) The United States has an interest in seeing political stability and economic development advance in the Congo Basin

countries. This interest will be adversely impacted if current deforestation and wildlife depletion rates are not reversed.

(9) Poorly managed and nonmanaged logging and hunting threatens to do to the Congo Basin what it did to West Africa, which lost much of its forest and wildlife through over-exploitation.

(10) Purged of wildlife, some Congo Basin forests already are “empty forests”.

(11) In an attempt to conserve the forests of the Congo Basin, the region’s governments convened the Yaounde (Cameroon) Forest Summit in March 1999.

(12) In September 2002, Secretary of State Colin Powell launched the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) in Johannesburg, South Africa. The CBFP promotes the conservation and sustainable use of the region’s forests, for example, by working to combat poaching, illegal logging, and other unsustainable practices, and giving local populations an economic stake in the preservation of the forests, including through the development of ecotourism.

(13)(A) The United States contribution to the CBFP will focus on conserving 11 key landscapes in 6 countries—Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of Congo—identified at the Yaounde Forest Summit as being of the greatest biological importance to the region.

(B) The United States will fund field-based activities within these 25,000,000 acres that aim to support a network of 27 national parks and protected areas and well-managed forestry concessions.

(C) In this way, the work will build on existing United States efforts, including those of the Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) of the United States Agency for International Development, which will implement the CBFP.

(14) The CBFP has broad international financial support, including from non-African governments, the European Commission, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and numerous nongovernment organizations.

(15) A dramatic step toward conserving Congo Basin forests has recently been taken by Gabon. In September 2002, President Omar Bongo announced the creation of 13 national parks, representing over 10 percent of Gabon’s surface area. Previously, Gabon had no national park system.

(16) With the CBFP and other initiatives, there exists unprecedented momentum for the conservation of Congo Basin forests.

SEC. 3. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to the President to carry out the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) program \$18,600,000 for fiscal year 2004.

(b) CARPE.—Of the amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations in subsection (a), \$16,000,000 is authorized to be made available to the Central Africa Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) of the United States Agency for International Development.

(c) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under subsection (a) are authorized to remain available until expended.

Approved February 13, 2004.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 2264:

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

Vol. 149 (2003): Oct. 7, considered and passed House.
Dec. 9, considered and passed Senate, amended.
Vol. 150 (2004): Feb. 3, House concurred in Senate amendments.

