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REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Unité*Travail*Progrès

-=-=-=-

MINSTRY OF FOREST ECONOMY

-=-=-=-=-=-

CABINET

-=-=-=-

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION BY THE REPUBLIC OF CONGO

-=-=-=-=-

Emission Reduction Program in five departments of the country

The LEAF Coalition

Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest finance

May 13, 2022

Call for Proposals

Performance-Based Public-Private Coalition for Tropical and Subtropical Forest Conservation

Coordinated by

Emergent

Protecting forests, beyond net zero.

The Lowering Emissions by Accelerating Forest finance (LEAF) Coalition aims to raise global climate ambition and contribute to halting tropical and subtropical deforestation and forest degradation by 2030.

It is a voluntary global coalition bringing together companies and governments to provide finance for tropical and subtropical forest protection at a scale not seen before.

The Call for Proposals aims to provide substantial financial support to tropical and subtropical countries that successfully reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

Instructions

Jurisdictions are invited to fill out this proposal template as an expression of their interest to participate in transactions related to the LEAF Coalition. Jurisdictions are invited to provide a cover letter signed by the highest relevant authority in their proposal submission.

Data included in the proposal should provide information on the jurisdiction's ability to meet ART TREES requirements and the ambition and readiness to implement activities to generate Emission Reductions and Removals while ensuring the full and effective participation of stakeholders. These are important criteria to determine eligibility and the proposal selection process.

To demonstrate a basic level of readiness to meet ART TREES requirements, jurisdictions submitting proposals to the LEAF Coalition should at minimum have in place the following:

- *An overall NDC target that includes forests*
- *A National Forest Monitoring system that is closely aligned with TREES carbon accounting requirements*
- *An existing REDD+ Strategy or Action Plan in place at the national level that can be used to develop the TREES Implementation Plan*
- *A Safeguards Information System (SIS) or an analogous system for providing information on addressing and respecting safeguards*
- *A Summary of Information (SoI) (national governments) or report on safeguards at the appropriate scale that is consistent with national reporting to the UNFCCC (Subnational governments)*

Where the elements listed above are not currently in place, jurisdictions should identify any existing gaps and provide a plan for addressing those gaps including a timeline and a description of the financial and technical support that has been secured or is in the process of being secured to address the gaps. Jurisdictions that demonstrate significant gaps in readiness and that do not provide an indication of plans for addressing such gaps will not be considered eligible at this time. Jurisdictions wishing to demonstrate higher levels of readiness are also encouraged to prepare a high-level gap assessment of conformance against TREES requirements to complement their proposal submission.

Please submit copies of the proposal in English and the jurisdiction's official language (if not English) in Word or PDF format. Please do not send scanned copies of the proposal. Jurisdictions are encouraged to provide succinct and clear responses, including relevant links where applicable. Throughout the review process, Emergent will follow-up with further questions on a case-by-case basis.

LEAF Proposal Submission – Host Jurisdiction Name

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Contact and Consent Form

Proposal submitted by (Name of Jurisdiction):	*The proposed ART/TREES accounting area includes the departments of Cuvette, Cuvette-Ouest, Kouilou, Lekoumou and Niari.*
Institution name:	MINSTRY OF FOREST ECONOMY
Country:	REPUBLIC OF CONGO
Focal point's name, title:	1- **Pierre TATY**, Cabinet Director of the Minister of of Forest Economy 2- **Carine Saturnine MILANDOU**, Director of the National Center for Inventory and Management of Forest and Wildlife Resources (CNIAF) 3- **Arnaud KIESSE KIMBINZA**, National REDD Coordinator
Email address:	pierretaty2020@gmail.com ; mcarinesat@gmail.com ; arnaudkiesse@gmail.com
Telephone:	+242066709643; +242066518034; +242069770433

Legal authority, Contacts, and Implementation Arrangements:

Please describe the legal authority to represent country or jurisdiction**,** key jurisdictional contacts and government entities managing the jurisdictional program. Please indicate preferences for how subsequent correspondence with the jurisdiction should be handled.

The Republic of Congo will be represented by the Minister in charge of the Ministry of Finance and Budget for the purposes of signing the ERPA, leveraging on the experience of the Carbon Fund:

Mr Roger Rigobert ANDELY
Minister of Finance, Budget and Public Portfolio
Professional address: intersection of Boulevard Denis SASSOU NGUESSO and Avenue Cardinal Emile Biayenda, B.P.: 2083 - Brazzaville, Republic of Congo

https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/FCPF%20ERPA%20Tranche%20A-B%20ROC%20-%20signed.pdf

The entity in charge of approving the terms of this Agreement will also be the Minister in charge of the Ministry of Forest Economy (MEF), already a partner in the Likouala Sangha emission reduction program of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), as well as the PREFOREST CONGO program of the Green Climate Fund (GCF):

Ms **Rosalie MATONDO**
Minister of Forest Economy
Professional address: Palais des Verts building, opposite the "Mother and Child" hospital. Children " Blanche Gomez, B.P.: 98 - Brazzaville, Republic of Congo

https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/system/files/documents/Letter%20of%20Intent%20ROC%2027JUN2017.pdf
https://www.fao.org/3/cb1351fr/cb1351fr.pdf

Expression of Consent

☒ The Jurisdiction, by checking this box, agrees to negotiate in good faith towards entering into an Emission Reductions Purchasing Agreement (ERPA) with Emergent, if the proposal is selected by the LEAF Coalition for further negotiation.

☒ The Jurisdiction, by checking this box, acknowledges and gives consent to the online publication of this Proposal Submission in both English and the jurisdiction's official language if it is to be assessed as eligible by the LEAF Coalition. All Annexes to the Proposal Submission will be considered confidential and will not be published without the express consent of the jurisdiction.

☒ The Jurisdiction, by checking this box, acknowledges that it must notify REDD+ stakeholders located within the TREES Accounting Area, including but not limited to, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), of this submission to LEAF and make the proposal publicly available to relevant stakeholders, in an accessible language to them.

Date of submission:	**14 September 2022**
Name of authorized representative:	**Madame Rosalie MATONDO** Minister of Forest Economy
Signature:	

ART TREES Eligibility and Documentation

1. Please check the applicable category that best defines the jurisdiction (see TREES 2.0 section 3.1)

☒ National government

☐ The TREES Accounting Area is national

☒ The TRESS Accounting Area is subnational

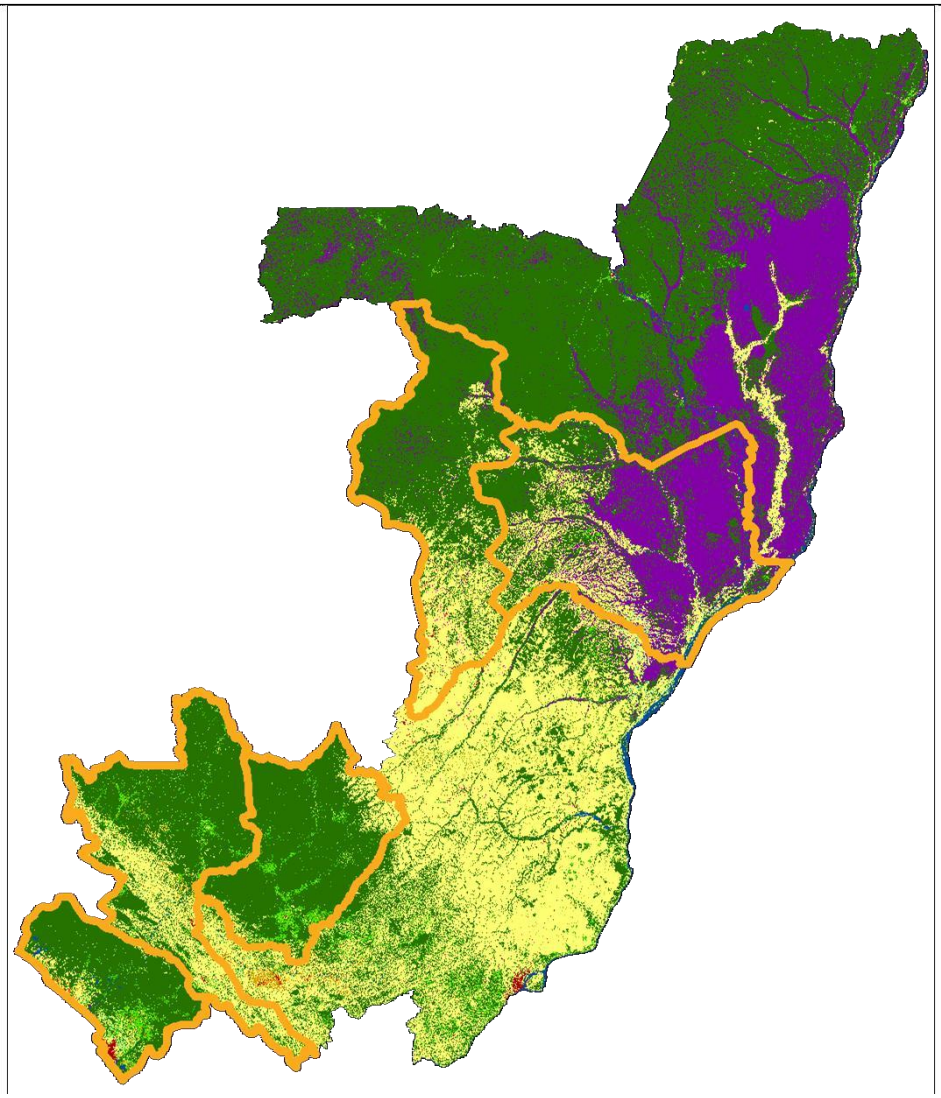
☐ Subnational jurisdiction (single subnational entity no more than one level down from national level)

☐ By checking this box, the jurisdiction acknowledges that ART requires a letter of authorization from the national government allowing the subnational Participant's application to and participation in ART.

2. Please provide a description of the TREES Accounting Area including the Accounting Area boundaries, and the total forest area contained within the Accounting Area. Please explain how the TREES Accounting Area boundaries meet the eligibility criteria in section 3.1 of the TREES 2.0 Standard. If the accounting area is subnational, please attach a map of boundaries.

The proposed ART/TREES accounting area includes the Cuvette, Cuvette-Ouest, Kouilou, Lekoumou and Niari departments, covering a total of 13.1 million hectares, of which 9.7 million hectares are forest (42% of the country's total forest area).

The accounting area excludes the departments of Sangha and Likouala to avoid double counting as they are already participating in the FCPF Carbon Fund Emissions Reduction Program. Three remaining departments with mainly savanna ecosystems and low forest cover are excluded from the TREES accounting area.



The first accounting period for Congo's ART/TREES program will begin in 2018, although for LEAF it will not be available for purchase until 2022.

- *2013-2017 - reference period I*
- *2018-2022 - accounting period I and reference period II*
- *2023-2027 - accounting period II*

The carbon credits offered to LEAF for the years 2022-2026 are therefore a combination of carbon credits from Crediting Period I and Crediting Period II.

3. Please check the box that best applies to the jurisdiction on the status of the TREES Concept Form:

☒ The jurisdiction **has NOT** submitted a TREES Concept Form to ART
☐ The jurisdiction has submitted a TREES Concept Form to ART that is **pending approval**
☐ The jurisdiction has submitted a TREES Concept Form to ART that **has been approved and listed** on the ART Registry

Carbon Accounting

Forest Emissions Reductions Targets

4. Please describe any quantified goals or targets to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation or increase sequestration in the forest sector.[1] Explain if and how these targets have been incorporated into the estimate of TREES Credits provided as part of the proposal. Please include any relevant timelines for meeting these goals or targets.

Strategic guidance for forest mitigation is provided by the REDD+ strategy, as well as the REDD+ investment plan. Based on this, the 2021 NDC lists the following quantitative targets for the forest sector (for both 2025 and 2030 horizons):
- 6,000 ha of reforestation
- 5,000 ha of avoided deforestation
- 4,000 ha of assisted natural regeneration

These targets are at the national level and the proposed program covers a sub-national area. As such, the targets are not directly applicable to the Congo TREES program, and they could not be used directly to construct a credit scenario.

Instead, the Rep. of Congo has chosen to estimate the expected amount of the TREES crediting scenario for the sub-national program based on the assumption that with TREES and LEAF support, deforestation and forest degradation could be maintained at their current level. This means that the ambition of the NDC exceeds the emission reduction projected in this proposal. Therefore, Congo is convinced that the amounts of carbon credits estimated later in this proposal are achievable if financial support from LEAF is available.

ERR Rights and Double Counting Provisions

5. Please describe the means (I.e., legal frameworks, regulations, administrative orders, benefit sharing agreements, contracts, or other means) by which the jurisdiction has clear ownership over or rights to the benefits from the Emissions Reductions and Removals (ERR) the jurisdiction has included in its indicative TREES Credit estimates (Questions 9-15 of the Proposal) in conformance with the requirements under Annex A of TREES 2.0. If the jurisdiction has rights to only a subset of those ERRs generated, please indicate the % that the jurisdiction has rights to. Please provide links to any relevant legislation or documentation.

[1] For example, a forest target or goal could be to reduce deforestation by X% and increase forest cover by X% by 2050 at a national or subnational scale.

The country has relevant legislation; however, it is advisable to refer to the new provisions of the Forestry Code approved by Law 33-2020, which regulate the matter, as well as to Order 113/2019.
https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC197361
https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC184986

The Forestry Code (2020) states that the national forest estate includes the State forest estate, made up of forests belonging to the State, local authorities and public persons; and the forest estate of private persons (Articles 9 and 10 of the Forestry Code). Article 179 states that the right to generate carbon credits and market them is recognized to natural or legal persons. Carbon credits can be generated from the State's permanent and non-permanent forests, either on their own or by REDD+ project promoters, on the basis of an authorization issued by the Minister in charge of forests, according to the conditions provided for by law.

If the forests belong to the State, local authorities or other legal persons under public law, the carbon credits generated belong respectively to the State, the local authority or other relevant legal person under public law (Article 180).

This first consideration is relevant in the context of ART-TREES, meaning that it will be necessary to differentiate the ownership of carbon credits according to the classification of the forests. Another consequence is that the jurisdictional entity (national or subnational) that will present itself to ART-TREES, will have to demonstrate how it will obtain the ownership of carbon credits when these are generated in territories belonging to local governments or other legal entities of public law. This could involve setting up arrangements or contracts to transfer the ownership of the carbon credits to the national entity in order to participate in ART-TREES.

In this regard, Order 113-2019 determining the principles on the REDD+ process states that "if the REDD+ project or program includes forests belonging to a third party and/or private forest plantations of a third party falling under the State forest estate, the project or program proponent's application must be accompanied by a note of transfer of rights to the Congolese Emission Reduction Units (ERs) of the persons concerned, the model of which is attached. Approval of the REDD+ project or program means recognition of the promoter's exclusive right to carry out the project or program in question and to claim the ERs based on a title deed" (Article 9).

Unless specifically stipulated, the concession of a natural forest or a forest plantation belonging to the State does not confer carbon rights to its assignee (Article 181). However, the carbon credits generated in a natural private forest owned by a natural or legal person, or a forest planted by this person, belong to him/her and in this case a note of transfer of rights to the ERs will be necessary if these areas are accounted for in the ART-TREES proposal. In community forests, however, the carbon credits generated belong solely or jointly to the relevant local community and/or indigenous people, depending on whether the project is implemented by them or by a third party.

Finally, "the assessment of the Project or Programme Document (PPD) must also include a detailed benefit-sharing plan, as well as evidence of the free, prior and informed consent of the affected local communities and/or indigenous peoples (Article 12)".

6. Please provide a preliminary description of the plan and procedures to ensure double counting is avoided per Section 13, TREES Standard. Please disclose any existing GHG programs or projects under which some or all of the accounting area may generate credits or payment for performance during the years 2022-2026 for TREES eligible activities as well as any existing agreements for transactions or other commitments for the projected TREES Credits.

The Rep. of Congo is committed to avoiding double counting. The risk of double counting is particularly relevant for projects under Verra's Verified Carbon Standard (VCS), including REDD and IFM projects. The risk is relevant where projects have issued or intend to issue carbon credits for years that overlap with the crediting period for ART/TREES and where the project areas fall within the proposed ART/TREES program area. Such a project is listed in the VCS registry.

The risk of double counting is less relevant for REDD and IFM projects that fall outside the proposed ART/TREES programme (e.g. https://registry.verra.org/app/projectDetail/VCS/1052 and https://registry.verra.org/app/projectDetail/VCS/2765). The risk of double counting is less relevant for ARR projects since removals are not part of the ART/TREES programme scope (e.g. https://registry.verra.org/app/projectDetail/VCS/2971 and https://registry.verra.org/app/projectDetail/VCS/2319). Finally, the risk of double counting is also less relevant for carbon sales to the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility since the geographical area of the Carbon Fund programme is distinct from the prospective area of the ART/TREES programme.

In the event of overlapping projects or programmes in the future, double counting will be avoided in a simple but effective manner. Double counting will be avoided by deducting emission reduction volumes issued or sold to third parties from the TREES compliant emission reduction volume before issuing ART credits.

It is to be expected that detailed information on mitigation projects and programs in the forestry sector will be available as there is a regulation that requires these projects and programs to apply for an approval register. According to Order 113-2019, any approval of a REDD+ program must go through a fairly detailed internal assessment process, which presumably avoids any risk of double counting.

In addition to following the internal validation process of the Project Document (PDD) ex Articles 10-13, possibly accompanied by the note of assignment of rights to the CRMs and duly registered, the proponent must carry out an external validation in accordance with the selected carbon standard completed within three years of its registration. The validation result and report must be submitted to the registry within two weeks of adoption. The process of submission, validation and registration of the REDD+ program according to both the internal procedure and the procedure defined by the carbon standard constitutes a guarantee to avoid double accounting for any REDD+ program that generated REs in the same reference period or zoning, provided the registry and established procedure are functional.

National Forest Monitoring System

7. Please describe the status of the National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) and the approaches used to establish emissions factors and generate activity data to quantify emissions from deforestation and degradation as well as forest removals. Describe how the methods used and the frequency of monitoring aligns with the TREES 2.0 requirements (see Section 4, TREES 2.0). Please provide a copy or link to the description of the current NFMS.

The National Forest Monitoring System of the Republic of Congo, called "SYNA-MNV", aims to estimate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and removals from the forestry sector (MEFDD / CN-REDD 2016).
To set up the SYNA-MNV of the REDD+ process in the Republic of Congo, three working groups were formed as part of a "Multidisciplinary Expert Panel". This Panel met regularly to make progress on the three following components:
- Component 1: Satellite Land Monitoring System (SSTS);
- Component 2: National Forest Inventory (NFI);
- Component 3: Greenhouse Gas Inventory (IGES).

Deforestation and forest degradation activity data
The Congo SSTS has produced a layered area estimate at the national level for the period 2000-2012, 2014-2016 followed by annual assessments for the period 2015-2020. The latter estimates were generated as part of the project *"Estimation of deforestation and forest degradation and current and historical direct drivers associated with these processes using SEPAL"* (https://congo.dddafrica.info/). The estimation is based on a sample, where the distribution of sample plots is layered using change maps for the periods 2000-2012, 2012-2014, 2014-2016, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020. The estimates at the department level are obtained using stratified area estimates and pixel number proportions for the departments covered. The most recent stratified area estimates available to Congo are for the period 2015-2020 (December 31, 2015 - December 31, 2020). Assessing forest degradation by remote sensing is difficult, and ground-derived data may provide more accurate estimates. The main driver of forest degradation in Congo is timber extraction. Therefore, timber extraction statistics at the departmental level are used as activity data to estimate degradation emissions. The last departmental level timber extraction figure was in 2016 (December 31). Thus, Congo uses deforestation data until the year 2020 and forest degradation data until the year 2016, after which projections are used.

Deforestation and forest degradation emission factor
The emission factor used to convert the deforestation area estimates into emission estimates consists of the AGB, BGB and DW pools, as obtained from the National Forest Inventory (Republic of Congo, 2020).

The emission factor used to convert estimates of timber extraction volume to estimated emissions includes emissions from transport, skidding and felling as assessed by Umunay et al 2019. Umunay et al (2019) provide gross emission estimates, which are converted to net emissions, these estimates taking into account the average post-degradation carbon stock over 20 years after timber extraction.

TREES Carbon Accounting for High Forest Low Deforestation (HFLD) Jurisdictions

OPTIONAL SECTION: *Complete if the jurisdiction is eligible to apply the HFLD Crediting Level and has elected to do so, otherwise leave blank. If HFLD jurisdictions complete this section, they are not required to complete the section for Non-HFLD jurisdictions.*

8. Please provide a description of how the jurisdiction meets the HFLD eligibility requirements in Section 5.2.1 of TREES 2.0. Include the calculated HFLD scores for each year of the historical reference period across the selected TREES accounting area.

With a forest cover of 69% and a deforestation rate of 0.05% (FREL 2016), Congo is a high forest cover, low deforestation country.
The HFLD score for each year of the TREES reference period for LEAF is: 0.69, 0.69, 0.68, 0.67 respectively for the years 2013-2017 in reference period 1 (for LEAF year 2022) and 0.66, 0.69, 0.71, 0.70, 0.70 for the years 2018-2022 in reference period 2 (for LEAF years 2023-2026).
These scores are slightly higher than the national score, which averages 0.62 for reference period 1 and 0.63 for reference period 2.

9. Volume estimates must be calculated in alignment with TREES 2.0 requirements (Sections 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, and Annex A). Please provide as an Annex, an Excel workbook[2] containing the calculation of TREES Credits. In the table below, provide a summary of the carbon accounting data from the Excel workbook including the estimated volume of TREES Credits expected to be available to transact for LEAF Coalition participants.

[2] The Excel accounting workbook provided should include transparent calculation formulas, labeled units for data, and source data references, such that all source data inputted into calculations of TREES Credits is traceable and easily reviewed for accuracy.

Vintage (year)	**TREES Crediting Level** (tCO2e)	**HFLD Crediting Level** (tCO2e)	**Projected Emissions** (tCO2e)	**Emissions Reductions** (tCO2e)	**Avoided Foregone Removals** (tCO2e)	**Buffer Deduction** (tCO2e)	**Leakage Deduction** (tCO2e)	**Uncertainty Deduction** (tCO2e)	**Deductions for DC and Rights*** (tCO2e)	**Total TREES Credits**** (tCO2e)
2022	5,886,089	7,565,775	5,886,000	1,679,775		251,966	167,977	160,650		1,099,181
2023	5,383,122	7,069,276	5,383,000	1,686,276		252,941	168,628	161,272		1,103,435
2024	5,383,122	7,069,276	5,383,000	1,686,276		252,941	168,628	161,272		1,103,435
2025	5,383,122	7,069,276	5,383,000	1,686,276		252,941	168,628	161,272		1,103,435
2026	5,383,122	7,069,276	5,383,000	1,686,276		252,941	168,628	161,272		1,103,435
Total										**5,512,922**

** Identify deductions required to comply with measures to avoid double counting, address instances where rights to the credits cannot be demonstrated at this time, and/or to account for instances where the TREES Credits have been committed elsewhere and are not available to the LEAF Coalition*

***Net of deductions*

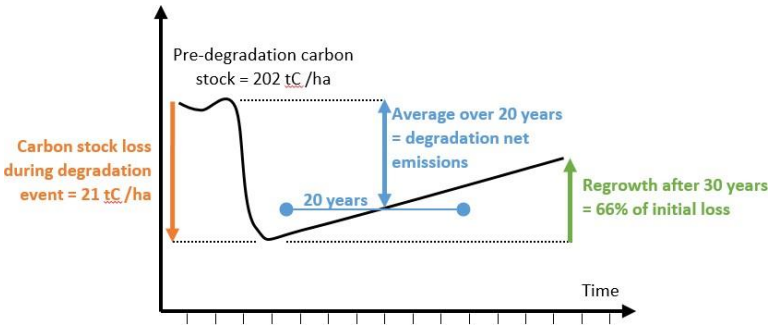
10. Please include the following in the response below:
    - Explain how the annual emissions reductions were estimated; justify how they are achievable and, if applicable, how they align with any stated forest targets
    - Provide a justification for the % deduction applied for buffer, leakage, and uncertainty following the TREES 2.0 requirements
    - Provide a brief explanation of how deductions in Column 10 (Deductions for Double Counting and Rights) were estimated and included in the calculation of TREES Credits
    - Explain any assumptions made to estimate the Total TREES Credits (e.g., assumptions made to estimate the TREES Crediting Level, projected emissions, or estimates of TREES deductions).
    - Please indicate the expected timeline for completing the first validation/verification under ART along with the expected frequency of subsequent verifications

The approach used to estimate emissions from degradation takes into account both the initial loss of carbon stock and regeneration.

The definition of the assessment period is critical in this regard. The IPCC guidelines often refer to a default assessment period of 20 years until vegetation reaches a new post-disturbance carbon stock balance. The carbon standards also include recommendations on these time frames.

In this submission, Congo has followed the 20-year timeframe required by ART/TREES. This has been achieved by drawing on a combination of information from previous work and scientific studies:

* Average carbon stock of undegraded forest = 202 Ct/ha (from Umunay et al., 2019)
* Carbon stock loss during the degradation event = 21 Ct /ha (from Umunay et al., 2019)
* 30-year regrowth after the degradation event = 66% (from the baseline submitted to the UNFCCC)



Emission factor for the Republic of Congo for emissions from forest degradation

Annual emissions reductions have been estimated for a scenario where Congo maintains its current low level of deforestation and forest degradation. This target aligns well with Congo's NDC, protecting the important sink function that its forests provide, particularly in its protected areas.

The following deductions were taken into account:

- The deduction for the reversal buffer pool is estimated at 15% using only mitigation factor 2, which automatically applies to HFLDs. It will be considered later whether Mitigation Factors 1 and 3 could apply, which refer to actively implemented legislation or executive decree demonstrably supporting REDD+, as well as national mitigation actions, plans or strategies developed in accordance with Cancun Safeguard F.
- The leakage deduction is evaluated at 10% because the TREES accounting area includes 42% of the country's total forest area, thus corresponding to the “average” leakage category.
- Finally, the deduction for uncertainty was calculated by estimating a combined uncertainty of 30%. The resulting deduction is 9.56%.
- Deductions for double counting and fees are currently estimated to be zero, as the Carbon Fund ER program does not overlap with the TREES accounting area and no registered VCS projects are taking place in the departments. (See also section 6 on this point).

The expected timeframe for completion of the first validation/verification under the ART, subject to available funding, would be around year 2024, including the first year LEAF 2022. The country is then expected to follow the follow-up periods as outlined in TREES v2 section 6.2: years 2025, 2027 and 2029.

TREES Carbon Accounting for Non-HFLD Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction must complete section if not HFLD or has not elected to apply the HFLD Crediting Level. HFLD jurisdictions that completed the previous section can leave this section blank.

11. Volume estimates must be calculated in alignment with TREES 2.0 Standard requirements (Sections 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, and Annex A). Please provide as an Annex, an Excel workbook[3] containing the calculation of TREES Credits. In the table below, provide a summary of the carbon accounting data from the Excel workbook including the estimated volume of TREES Credits from emissions reductions expected to be available to transact for LEAF Coalition participants.

Vintage (year)	**TREES Crediting Level** (tCO2e)	**Projected Emissions** (tCO2e)	**Emissions Reductions** (tCO2e)	**Buffer Deduction** (tCO2e)	**Leakage Deduction** (tCO2e)	**Uncertainty Deduction** (tCO2e)	**Deductions for DC and Rights*** (tCO2e)	**Total TREES Credits**** (tCO2e)
Total								

** Identify deductions required to comply with measures to avoid double counting, address instances where rights to the credits cannot be demonstrated at this time, and/or to account for instances where the TREES Credits have been committed elsewhere and are not available to the LEAF Coalition*

***Net of deductions*

12. Please include the following in the response below:
    - Explain how the annual emissions reductions were estimated; justify how they are achievable and, if applicable, how they align with any stated forest targets
    - Provide a justification for the % deduction applied for buffer, leakage, and uncertainty following the TREES 2.0 requirements
    - Provide a brief explanation of how deductions in Column 10 (Deductions for Double Counting and Rights) were estimated and included in the calculation of TREES Credits
    - Explain any assumptions made to estimate the Total TREES Credits (e.g., assumptions made to estimate the TREES Crediting Level, projected emissions, or estimates of TREES deductions).
    - Please indicate the expected timeline for completing the first validation/verification under ART along with the expected frequency of subsequent verifications

Non applicable

[3] The Excel accounting workbook provided should include transparent calculation formulas, labeled units for data, and source data references, such that all source data inputted into calculations of TREES Credits is traceable and easily reviewed for accuracy.

TREES Carbon Accounting for Removals

OPTIONAL SECTION: *Complete if the jurisdiction has elected to include Removals, otherwise leave blank.*

13. Volume estimates must be calculated in alignment with TREES 2.0 requirements (Sections 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, and Annex A). Please provide as an Annex, an Excel workbook[4] containing the calculation of TREES Credits. In the table below, provide a summary of the carbon accounting data from the Excel workbook including the estimated volume of TREES Credits from removals expected to be available to transact for LEAF Coalition participants.

Note: In conformance with TREES 2.0 requirements (section 5.3), where the jurisdiction has data to distinguish between natural regeneration and commercial forests, please fill out full table below, providing a TREES Removals Crediting Level for commercial forests only. If data is not available to differentiate between natural regeneration and commercial forests, no data should be allocated to the "Projected Removals – Natural Regeneration" column, and instead the Removals Crediting Level and "Projected Removals – Commercial Forests" columns should contain removals data for both commercial forests and areas of natural regeneration following TREES requirements.

Vintage (year)	**TREES Removals Crediting Level** (tCO2e)	**Projected Removals – Natural Regeneration** (tCO2e)	**Projected Removals – Commercial Forests** (tCO2e)	**Buffer Deduction** (tCO2e)	**Leakage Deduction** (tCO2e)	**Uncertainty Deduction** (tCO2e)	**Deductions for DC and Rights*** (tCO2e)	**Total TREES Credits**** (tCO2e)
Total								

** Identify deductions required to comply with measures to avoid double counting, address instances where rights to the credits cannot be demonstrated at this time, and/or to account for instances where the TREES Credits have been committed elsewhere and are not available to the LEAF Coalition*
***Net of deductions*

14. Please include the following in the response below:
    - Explain how the annual emissions reductions were estimated; justify how they are achievable and, if applicable, how they align with any stated forest targets
    - Provide a justification for the % deduction applied for buffer, leakage, and uncertainty following the TREES 2.0 requirements

[4] The Excel accounting workbook provided should include transparent calculation formulas, labeled units for data, and source data references, such that all source data inputted into calculations of TREES Credits is traceable and easily reviewed for accuracy.

- Provide a brief explanation of how deductions in Column 8 (Deductions for Double Counting and Rights) were estimated and included in the calculation of TREES Credits
- Explain any assumptions made to estimate the Total TREES Credits (e.g., assumptions made to estimate the TREES Crediting Level, projected emissions, or estimates of TREES deductions).
- Please indicate the expected timeline for completing the first validation/verification under ART along with the expected frequency of subsequent verifications

Non applicable

MRV and Technical Gaps

15. If the National Forest Monitoring System is not fully functional or there are significant gaps in technical capacity to produce the data needed to conform to the TREES 2.0 requirements, please provide a plan that includes the following:
    - Description of gaps in NFMS and/or technical capacity to meet TREES
    - Description of the necessary financial and technical support that has been secured or is in the process of being secured to address remaining gaps
    - Timeline for addressing gaps and an estimate of the potential impact on the timing for the issuance of TREES credits

    A plan for addressing gaps can be provided as an annex. Assessments of conformance with TREES requirements, such as the UNDP PLANT Tool, should be provided where available. All Annexes to the Proposal Submission will be considered confidential and will not be published without the express consent of the jurisdiction.

According to the Final Report on the SYNA-MNV of the REDD+ process in the Republic of Congo[5] , the MNV function of the SYNA-MNV will be operational when it allows : ● Measuring biomass, carbon stocks and area changes of forest land at the national scale and changes in forest carbon stocks in the national forest estate (NFE) ● Estimate, report and verify emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in the DFN [3]. Significant progress towards this operationalization has been made in recent years. In 2010, the CR launched its first National Forest Inventory (NFI, 2009-2014).

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http://www.mefdd.cg/no_cache/publications/?tx_abdownloads_pi1[action]=getviewclickeddownload&tx_abdownloads_pi1[uid]=128

CNIAF was supported by the UN-REDD programme to carry out a forest change area estimate, which enabled the Rep. of Congo to develop and become the first country in Africa to submit a FREL to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in 2016.

The SYNA-MNV, and in particular its SSTS and IGES components, can be better structured and the data processing chains standardized to update the data that will accompany the revised FREL, in particular statistical estimates of annual deforestation and degradation areas based on a sampling system with cross-validation, which is valid at the departmental level and can be aggregated for the area of interest proposed here.

Degradation was estimated in the baseline by the proxy of extracted wood, at national level. Updated data on wood extraction by department should be collected for the years 2016-2021. If these data could distinguish between FSC-certified and non-certified extraction, the emission factors (EF) could be diversified according to the different practices.

Methods and tools to assess trends in forest cover and associated emissions from cloud-based computational tools are now available, and greatly automate the workflows of a unit such as CNIAF to produce forest monitoring data.

The Republic of Congo benefits from financial and technical support (CAFI & FAO) to operationalize its SYNA-MNV. Gaps to produce ART-TREES compatible activity data have been identified and strengthening activities planned until the end of 2023 to fill these gaps, including emission factors for forest degradation.

Cancun Safeguards

Safeguard Information System and Summary of Information on Safeguards

16. Please describe the status of the jurisdiction's Safeguards Information System (SIS) or an analogous system for providing information on addressing and respecting safeguards, including whether the system is currently operational at the appropriate scale (see Section 3.1, TREES 2.0). Please also identify whether the jurisdiction has submitted a Summary of Information (SoI) (national governments) or report on safeguards at the appropriate scale that is consistent with national reporting to the UNFCCC (Subnational governments) (see Section 3.1, TREES 2.0). Please provide a link to the current Safeguard Information System (or analogous system) or provide supporting documentation describing the design of such systems. Please also provide a link to the current SoI if available.

The Republic of Congo has made substantial progress in defining a national approach to Cancun safeguards and in developing key processes and plans to support safeguards implementation, particularly through its FCPF-supported Sangha-Likouala Emission Reduction Program (ER-P). As a result, Congo's Principles, Criteria and National REDD+ Indicators (PCI-REDD+) form the basis of the country's safeguards approach. In addition, a Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) and an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) have also been prepared.

Congo is developing its Safeguards Information System (SIS) in a phased approach, building on its concept paper. The SIS will consist of an institutional, information and technology platform for collecting, compiling, processing, analyzing and communicating information on how PCI-REDD+ will be taken into account and complied with in the implementation of REDD+ activities.

Work has also been initiated on the development of a first summary of safeguards information, which is being developed through a participatory process and will be submitted to the UNFCCC once finalized.

TREES Safeguard Requirements

17. Please describe how the SIS or analogous system for providing information on safeguards will inform TREES safeguards conformity and explain whether the national government has a national safeguards framework/approach, developed in line with the Cancun Safeguards, that can be used as a foundation for meeting TREES Safeguards requirements (Section 12, TREES 2.0).

The Republic of Congo's national safeguards approach, based on the PCI-REDD+ and the processes developed for the ERP, will support the country's efforts to meet the requirements of LEAF safeguards. A preliminary assessment of the ART/TREES safeguards requirements was conducted, taking into account the SIS and summary information requirements, as well as reviewing evidence of compliance with the 44 TREES safeguards indicators. Relevant gaps, and proposed actions to address them, were identified.

The main gaps related to the status of the Republic of Congo's SIS and the first summary of information should be addressed in the short term. In addition, specific areas for strengthening the legal framework and REDD+ specific procedures and information include:

- making additional information on safeguards and implementation of REDD+ publicly available;
- further strengthening the legal aspects of transparency, access to information, anti-corruption, benefit-sharing and grievance settlement;
- Operationalize and further support capacity building related to the benefits distribution system, the grievances management mechanism, FPIC processes, natural forest inventory and mapping, and stakeholder engagement;

- clarification of regulations and procedures for certain aspects of safeguards, such as the protection of traditional knowledge, impact assessment and mitigation, and management of reversal and displacement risks.

18. Please indicate whether a gap assessment has been carried out to determine the level of conformance with the TREES Safeguards structure, process, and outcome indicators. If a gap assessment has already been conducted, please fill out the table below to indicate for each TREES Safeguard Theme whether the jurisdiction can demonstrate conformance against the TREES structure and process indicators (see Section 12, TREES 2.0). Assessments of conformance, such as the UNDP PLANT Tool, should be provided as an annex where available. All Annexes to the Proposal Submission will be considered confidential and will not be published without the express consent of the jurisdiction.

A gap assessment was undertaken in mid-2021 by UNEP. The results are summarized below.
The UN-REDD Programme, in particular UNEP, will provide technical assistance to Congo from 2023 for the establishment and deployment of the safeguards information system.

Complete	Jurisdiction can demonstrate conformance with the indicator
Partially Complete	Jurisdiction can demonstrate progress towards meeting indicator and provide a plan for meeting such indicator prior to the start of the indicated Crediting Period
Incomplete	Jurisdiction has no evidence to demonstrate conformance or progress towards conforming to the indicator

Use the guide above to fill the table below and please remove example answers prior to completing with jurisdiction-specific information:

Cancun Safeguard	Theme	Structure Indicator	Process Indicator
Cancun Safeguard A	Theme 1.1	Fully conformant	Fully conformant
Cancun Safeguard A	Theme 1.2	Fully conformant	Fully conformant
Cancun Safeguard B	Theme 2.1	Partially conformant	Partially conformant
Cancun Safeguard B	Theme 2.2	Partially conformant	Fully conformant
Cancun Safeguard B	Theme 2.3	Fully conformant	Partially conformant
Cancun Safeguard B	Theme 2.4	Partially conformant	Partially conformant
Cancun Safeguard C	Theme 3.1	Fully conformant	Fully conformant

Cancun Safeguard C	Theme 3.2	Fully conformant	Partially conformant
Cancun Safeguard C	Theme 3.3	Fully conformant	Partially conformant
Cancun Safeguard D	Theme 4.1	Fully conformant	Fully conformant
Cancun Safeguard D	Theme 4.2	Fully conformant	Fully conformant
Cancun Safeguard E	Theme 5.1	Fully conformant	Fully conformant
Cancun Safeguard E	Theme 5.2	Fully conformant	Fully conformant
Cancun Safeguard E	Theme 5.3	Fully conformant	Fully conformant
Cancun Safeguard F	Theme 6.1	Fully conformant	Partially conformant
Cancun Safeguard G	Theme 6.2	Fully conformant	Partially conformant

19. Please provide a high-level description of the measures the jurisdiction is currently implementing to ensure that stakeholders, in particular Indigenous Peoples and local communities are involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring of REDD+ activities including the development of benefit sharing plans. Explain how the rights of Indigenous People and local communities are being respected and protected in conformance with TREES Cancun Safeguards B, C, and D and how they will continue to be respected and protected throughout the TREES Crediting Period. Finally, please specify how the jurisdiction intends to address gender equity and social inclusion in the implementation plan, investment framework and benefit-sharing plans or agreements.

There has been strong stakeholder engagement in the Rep. of Congo REDD+ process. For example, Congolese civil society is very involved in the REDD+ process at the national level through its REDD+ Platform for Concertation of Civil Society Organizations and Indigenous Peoples (CACO-REDD). In addition, the National Network of Indigenous Peoples (RENAPAC) has been involved in the REDD+ process since 2008, and since 2012 has been part of CACO-REDD. RENAPAC regularly organizes visits to indigenous communities to raise awareness on REDD+.

On the basis of the Forestry Code (Law 33-2020), the management of the national forest estate is based on the principle of the State's sovereignty over natural resources, as well as that of consultation and participation of the relevant stakeholders in the sustainable management of forests. In addition, local communities and indigenous populations express their free, informed and prior consent in the design, monitoring and implementation of actions and decisions regarding the exploitation and sustainable management of forest resources (Article 5). Community forests are part of the State's permanent forest estate (article 10), but those classified by decree in the Council of Ministers for their benefit, in order to meet cultural, recreational, production, protection and conservation needs, as well as plantations planted in an area belonging to them, are considered to be local community forests, and thus part of their private estate (articles 24 and 25). The monitoring of these areas to ensure their conservation and sustainable use is carried out by a series of institutional actors that have a close link with the territory, and involves the participation of representatives of civil society, local communities and indigenous peoples. This aspect seems important because it allows all local actors to participate effectively in local life and thus influence actions at the level of the territory that aim to better manage natural resources and forests in a spirit of co-responsibility and co-management of the territory.

In order to transfer and share the benefits derived from forest management, five mechanisms have been put in place by the forestry legislation: the forest area tax, the deforestation tax

(Schmitt & Baketiba, 2015), the local development fund (LDF) (KAYE, 2012) linked to the creation of a community development series (CDS) within managed forest concessions, and social clauses in concession contracts and compensation. A multi-stakeholder advisory committee oversees the LDF, and funds are intended to finance income-generating activities in line with local development plans. Congolese civil society organizations (CSOs) believe that the implementation of existing mechanisms should be improved, without having to change the mechanisms themselves. The implementation of the new forestry code is a step forward in this respect, as it will allow the creation of community forests on the one hand, and support for IPLCs to be able to exploit them effectively on the other.

In the REDD+ context, in addition to these mechanisms established by law, it is planned to take into account an active and transparent participation of local communities in the development and implementation of the benefit-sharing plan, according to the principles and criteria duly defined in the national REDD+ strategy.

Safeguard Gaps

20. If the jurisdiction does not have an operational SIS (or analogous system) or has not submitted a SoI to the UNFCCC (national governments) or has not prepared a report on safeguards at the appropriate scale that is consistent with national reporting to the UNFCCC (subnational governments), please provide a plan that includes the following:
    - Description of what steps are needed to ensure an operational SIS (or analogous system) and/or completing the submission of a SoI (or analogous report)
    - Description of the necessary financial and technical support that has been secured or is in the process of being secured to address gaps
    - Timeline for operationalizing the SIS (or analogous system) and completing SoI (or analogous report)

A plan for addressing gaps can be provided as an annex.

Congo's safeguards approach was developed before the ART/TREES Safeguards Guidelines were available. An initial gap analysis indicates that support is needed to ensure that the development of Congo's SIS, and subsequent efforts to strengthen the safeguards approach, can support compliance with the ART/TREES safeguards indicators.

- Technical assistance will be needed to implement the agreed actions to fill the gaps in order to demonstrate compliance with all TREES safeguard requirements, including the structure and process indicators. Technical assistance will also be needed in the longer term to ensure that the Republic of Congo can collect information and demonstrate compliance with the "outcome" safeguard indicators.
- The Republic of Congo has not yet submitted a first summary of information to the UNFCCC. Safeguard information should be collected on an ongoing basis to cover the TREES accounting periods and a first summary should be developed and submitted that fully meets the objectives of the Republic of Congo's safeguard approach and the requirements of ART/TREES.

- The Republic of Congo has not yet fully implemented a Safeguards Information System (SIS), although it has defined key design elements and a clear phased approach to implementation. Support will be needed to establish a fully operational SIS and ensure that it meets the identified requirements of the national safeguards approach as well as ART/TREES.
Support is also needed to build capacity to respond to requests related to the validation and third-party verification of safeguards information required by TREES. In addition, additional financial resources may be required to cover the costs of this validation and verification process

21. If a gap assessment has not been carried out by the jurisdiction to identify conformance against the TREES Safeguards[6], please provide a plan that includes the following information:
    - Description of the proposed process for identifying and resolving gaps in TREES Safeguard Structure and Process Indicators
    - Description of the necessary financial and technical support that has been secured or is in the process of being secured to identify gaps in conformance with TREES Safeguard requirements
    - Timeline for conducting the gap assessment

A plan for addressing gaps can be provided as an annex. Assessments of conformance such as the UNDP PLANT Tool should be provided where available. All Annexes to the Proposal Submission will be considered confidential and will not be published without the express consent of the jurisdiction.

A first gap assessment has already been conducted, see above. Specific sources of financial and technical support have not yet been secured. After more clarity emerges on the interest of LEAF buyers, Congo would be happy to engage in capacity building work on safeguards. This should involve:
• More detailed gap analysis and operational planning of required technical inputs
• Upgrading the SIS to comply with ART/TREES backup indicators
Generation of SoI for the whole country - as well as for the ART/TREES programme area, during the ART/TREES crediting period(s)

REDD+ Policy Overview

NDC Commitments

22. Please describe the NDC targets at the national level and please specify if the national government includes forests as part of their NDC target in alignment with TREES requirements (Section 3.1.2, TREES 2.0).

[6] Note that conformance with the TREES Safeguard Structure and Process Indicators must be demonstrated at the start of the TREES Crediting period to be eligible to issue TREES Credits.

Congo has published a revised NDC in 2021 that sets mitigation targets. The targets are disaggregated by sector (including for the forestry and land use sector) and refer to the years 2017-2030. A BAU scenario is provided, as well as an unconditional target without international support and conditional support if international support is available.

As a result, in a BAU scenario, forest emissions will increase from 2947 tCO2e/year to 4319 tCO2e/year over the period 2017-2030. Without international support, Congo expects to be able to reduce forest emissions in 2030 to 3070 tCO2e/year. If international support were available, Congo could reduce forest emissions in 2030 to only 1199 tCO2e/year.

REDD+ Implementation Plan

23. Please share whether an existing REDD+ Strategy or Action Plan is in place at the national level that will be used to develop the REDD+ Implementation Plan required under TREES and provide a link to relevant documentation (see Section 3.2, TREES 2.0). If not, please provide a plan to prepare a national REDD+ Strategy or Action Plan, including cooperation with technical and institutional partners.

    For Subnational Participants only: Please indicate if the jurisdiction has identified the relevant REDD+ interventions from the National REDD+ Strategy or Action Plan that will be implemented at a subnational level.

The Republic of Congo has been engaged in REDD+ since 2008. The country submitted a forest reference emission level to the UNFCCC in 2016 (including deforestation and forest degradation) and published its REDD+ strategy in 2017. The national REDD+ strategy was approved by Decree No. 2018-223 of 5 June 2018. In 2018, Congo finalized its National REDD+ Investment Plan 2018-2025. In 2019, Congo became a member of the Carbon Fund pipeline with an emission reduction program in the departments of Sangha and Likouala.

The REDD+ strategy, the National REDD+ Investment Plan and other key documents are available as follows:
http://cog.registreredd.org/Pub-REDD?l=fr http://cog.registreredd.org/Processus-redd/phase2redd/REDD-PISN?l=fr

In addition, the following strategic documents closely support the REDD+ process in the Republic of Congo:

National Development Plan; Forestry policy; and
National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD)

The Republic of Congo's national REDD+ strategy is also aligned with the following legal instruments which guarantee its legitimacy:

-The Constitution of 06 November 2015, which makes the management and protection of the environment a constitutional principle;

- Law n°003/91 of 23 April 1991 on environmental protection, which has a multisectoral scope and
- Law 33-2020, an important tool for forest governance, which aims to achieve the objectives of sustainable development. It takes into account the REDD+ mechanism.
- Law 10/2004 establishing the general principles applicable to land and property tenure;
- Law 43/2014 on the orientation of land use and development, which states that "the State shall implement a land allocation policy that guarantees the simultaneous development of the different sectors of activity and respects the different forms of land ownership";
- Law 5/2011 on the promotion and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Under the newly revised Forest Code, REDD+ is a recognized mechanism for strengthening the Republic's forest management and the State assumes the task of developing appropriate measures to encourage payments for REDD+ "environmental services" (Articles 177 et seq., CF 2020).

The national REDD+ strategy will be used as the basis for preparing the REDD+ implementation plan for ART-TREES.

24. If a REDD+ Strategy or Action Plan at the national level is not yet in place or if a subnational participant has not yet identified relevant REDD+ interventions from the National REDD+ Strategy or Action Plan that will be implemented at a subnational level, please provide a plan that includes the following:
    - Description of steps needed to finalize a REDD+ Strategy or Action Plan at the national level and/or steps needed to identify the relevant REDD+ interventions from the National REDD+ Strategy or Action Plan to be implemented at a subnational level
    - Description of the necessary financial and technical support that has been secured or is in the process of being secured to address remaining gaps
    - Timeline for completing the national level REDD+ Strategy or Action Plan and/or identifying subnational REDD+ activities aligned with the national level REDD+ Strategy or Action Plan and an estimate of the potential impact on the timing for the issuance of TREES credits

A plan for addressing gaps can be provided as an annex.

Both the REDD+ strategy and the investment plan are developed to reflect activities at the national level. The ART/TREES program will be sub-national in scope. A process will need to be undertaken to identify the best strategy to keep deforestation and forest degradation rates low for the ART/TREES program. This strategy should be developed during the development of a benefit-sharing plan.

There are no details yet available on the financial and technical support required and the timeframe for the development of the sub-national implementation strategy. However, Congo does not expect any negative impact on the timing of the issuance of TREES credits. The ART/TREES forward-looking programme plans to use the HFLD modality to set the credit level and the credit is expected to

occur in the scenario where emissions remain at their current low level, but not as a result of policy action that would still need to be developed.

Policies and Measures

25. Please provide a summary of the policies and measures that have been (or will be) implemented to effectively to reduce deforestation/forest degradation and enhance sequestration in the jurisdiction. Where possible, provide a reference to where this information is publicly provided.

The National REDD+ Strategy (SN-REDD) has been formulated with the following objectives:
- Develop multi-sectoral and coordinated approaches to plan new investments that can reduce deforestation and forest degradation;
- Develop an effective institutional system for REDD+ implementation.

The five (05) strategic axes to implement the REDD+ strategy are the following:
Strategic Area 1: Strengthening governance and implementing mechanisms for sustainable financing.
Strategic sub-area
1.1 Strengthening governance aspects
1.2 Strengthening intersectoral coordination through the development and implementation of a National Land Use Plan (NLUP) and a National Land Management Scheme (NLMS)
1.3 Land management improvement
1.4 : Implementing sustainable financing mechanisms
Strategic Area 2: Sustainable management and development of forest resources.
2.1 Sustainable forest management
2.2 Capacity building of the forestry administration and supervision of the artisanal sector
2.3 Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity
2.4 Promotion and development of non-timber forest products (NTFPs)
2.5 : Increasing forest carbon stocks
Strategic Area 3: Improving farming systems.
3.1 Improving the conditions of the agricultural profession and productivity
3.2 Sustainable agribusiness development
3.3 Support for sustainable agricultural research and extension
Strategic Area 4: Rationalizing the production and use of wood energy and promoting clean energy
4.1 Strengthen wood energy production
4.2 Improving wood energy processing and utilization technologies
4.3 Valorization of wood waste for transformation into energy

4.4: Development and encouragement of the use of clean energy ...
Strategic Area 5: Development o f a green mining sector to minimize the impact of the mining sector on forests
5.1 Development of a joint statement on relevant REDD+ principles and national standards for the industrial and semi-industrial mining sector
5.2 Support for the implementation of reduced impact mining (RIM)
5.3 Support for the implementation of a compensation system in connection with CSR
5.4 Professionalization of the artisanal mining sector

Each strategic area is detailed in strategic sub-area. Each sub-area specifies the nature of the activities and sub-activities to be implemented in order to provide concrete responses to the various causes of deforestation and forest degradation.

They will be implemented in the intervention areas according to the modalities established by the Government, and in line with the priorities of the five selected departments, in order to achieve tangible ER results.

http://wri-sites.s3.amazonaws.com/forest-atlas.org/cog.forest-atlas.org/resources/docs/Redd_registry/Strategie_nationale_REDD_Republique_Congo.pdf

Use of Proceeds

26. Please describe how proceeds from transactions with the LEAF coalition will be used to ensure the long-term success of measures to reduce deforestation and degradation and promote sustainable development. In providing an initial outline of this investment framework, please keep in mind the following aspects: consistency of investments with the host jurisdiction's NDC, relevance of the investment to address direct and indirect drivers of deforestation, and incentives for forest restoration.

The use of proceeds derived from LEAF transactions will most likely accompany the implementation of policies and measures identified in the REDD+ strategy targeting major constraints and challenges in the five intervention departments, and taking into account the benefit-sharing plan to be developed in this regard.

However, the financing plan still needs to be subjected to internal consultations within the Government and the country, and more time is needed to define the details of the measures taken in this regard.

Benefit Distribution

27. Please describe any existing systems for the distribution of benefits from REDD+ proceeds to stakeholders in the jurisdiction, including to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) (e.g.,

for other programs like Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, bi-lateral agreements, or Green Climate Fund funding). If possible, please provide links to such plans.

The implementation of the benefit-sharing mechanism under the national REDD+ strategy will be based on a consultative, transparent and participatory process with local communities, indigenous peoples, and other stakeholders. A preliminary version of the benefit-sharing mechanism is being consolidated.

Benefit sharing is based, among other things, on the principles of transparency and participation in regards to access to information, decision-making, contracts and company obligations to communities, as well as the measurement or approximation of performance.

The following stakeholders are eligible for benefit sharing:

- Those having directly or indirectly contributed to efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation by implementing REDD+ project and program activities;
- Owners of rights (customary or legal) on the land on which REDD+ activities are carried out (landowner, tenant or concessionaire) who depend on the use of forests for their livelihoods, and therefore enjoy the right of use,
- Those having a land user right conferred in a contractual and written manner within the scope of the REDD+ project or program implementation.

http://cog.registreredd.org/outils-REDD/PGPA?l=fr

Under the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) a Benefit Sharing Plan for the Sangha Likouala ER-Program has been developed (2020 version below), which was the culmination of a process started in 2015 with departmental consultations in the chief towns and localities of Sangha and Likouala to: (i) prepare and validate the benefit sharing principles, (ii) assess the investment contributions and indirect benefits of stakeholders, (iii) determine and validate the distribution of benefits among beneficiary groups, costs for transactions and also for reinvestments in ER-Programme (ER-P in English version or PRE in French version) Sangha Likouala activities, (iv) confirm the agreement of the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples (IPLCs).

This BSP is available at the following link:
https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/752321611156088200/pdf/Republic-of-Congo-Benefit-Sharing-Plan-for-the-Emission-Reduction-Program-ERP-for-Sangha-Likouala.pdf

An approach similar to that of the FCPF would be carried out within the framework of ART-TREES in compliance with the laws, policies and principles that represent the foundations of REDD+ and the respect of REDD+ safeguards in Congo. In this sense, an essential aspect will be to engage stakeholders, i.e., territorial and institutional representatives from the five departments, local communities and indigenous peoples (with a representative composition of both genders) in an equitable manner, as well as private actors, from the beginning of the process of developing the benefit-sharing plan, but also taking into account the provisions of the new forest code, notably the importance of recognizing the holders of customary rights and land use rights as beneficiaries of

carbon credits (Article 180, Forestry Code). The key elements are based on the following principles: transparency, participation, inclusion, social justice, sustainability, equity, accountability and fairness

Financial Intermediary (FI)

OPTIONAL SECTION: *Complete if the jurisdiction has identified a possible FI, otherwise leave blank.*

28. A Green Climate Fund (GCF) accredited entity (FI) must be identified by the HJ as a channel for the disbursement of funds. FIs will ensure that robust monitoring and reporting procedures on the use of proceeds are in place. If available, please provide the name of the proposed institution(s) and indicate if there have been initial discussions or negotiations.

The Republic of Congo has not identified any financial intermediary at this stage.

Transaction Pathways

29. Please indicate the jurisdiction's willingness to transact under each of the four pathways listed in the Call for Proposals (CFP) document under "Nature of transactions". Please identify and describe any legislative and/or political barriers to transact under certain pathways.

The Republic of Congo is aware of the four options proposed by LEAF for the nature of the transactions and considers all four as possible, at this stage.

However, there is no experience yet available in Congo on making the corresponding adjustment (required for pathway #4). A decision-making process for this has not been tested, nor is an administrative approach for making the corresponding adjustments available. Further capacity development would probably be necessary if buyers were specifically and exclusively interested in in pathway #4 transactions.

30. For jurisdictions willing to transact under Pathway 4:

Please indicate if the jurisdiction will have the appropriate reporting mechanisms and the ability to apply a corresponding adjustment in alignment with Article 6 guidance, by issuance of credits. If applicable, please indicate the portion of total ERRs for which the jurisdiction proposes to make a corresponding adjustment to the national account.

See above, the Republic of Congo has not yet gained experience in making the relevant adjustments and Congo has not yet engaged in Article 6. A process should be created, if pathway 4 is of main interest to LEAF buyers.

REDD+ Policy and Implementation Gaps

31. Please identify any significant gaps in capacity or existing barriers to implement REDD+ policies and measures to generate ERRs and provide a high-level plan for addressing those gaps and/or barriers.

There are some important gaps in the policy and implementation aspects of REDD+. Congo is motivated to undertake significant capacity development efforts over the next few years to enable participation in TREES and LEAF. As indicated above, these gaps include: • Though a REDD+ strategy is available and mitigation policies and measures have been identified in general terms, it will be important to disaggregate these to the sub-national level for the programme area. A process will need to be undertaken to identify the best strategy to keep deforestation and forest degradation rates low for the ART/TREES programme. This strategy should be developed in the development of a benefit-sharing plan. There are no details yet available on the financial and technical support needed and the timeframe for developing the sub-national implementation strategy. • Although a benefit-sharing plan has been developed for the Congo FCPF Carbon Fund program, it will need to be updated for a new ART/TREES program. The area of intervention is different and therefore different activities and stakeholder groups also need to be taken into account. Many additional consultations will be required. • A financial intermediary must be identified. • A detailed plan for the use of proceeds needs to be developed, in line with LEAF requirements. This development could be undertaken in close collaboration with the financial intermediary (yet to be identified). • An approach is needed to report in accordance with the requirements of Article 6 and make the corresponding adjustments (if pathway 4 is to be considered).

- The registry created by Order 113-2019 to track REDD+ projects/programs and Congolese emission reduction units (ERs) issued and transferred to third parties must be fully operational to avoid any risk of double counting or competing claims on emission reductions. This will certainly require technical and financial support.
- Institutional capacity building will also be needed to implement a FPIC process in accordance with Article 5 of the Forestry Code (2020) and to implement the decentralization of carbon rights to the program entity, where applicable, in accordance with Order 113- 2019.