

**Testimony of Keith Brown, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator
Bureau for Africa
U.S. Agency for International Development
Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Subcommittee on Africa
July 24, 2003**

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify here today at this important hearing on saving the Congo Basin. I am pleased to join my colleagues from the Department of State. It is important to note that the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of State have been in close collaboration throughout the development of the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP). We will continue to work together along with other US government agencies, African governments, and US and African conservation and business groups to ensure a strong partnership for the Congo Basin. We have great hopes for the future of the Congo Basin because in the words of Secretary of State Colin Powell:

[those]... in this partnership, have agreed to work together to help the countries of the Congo Basin create and manage protected forest areas, such as national parks. ... [and] will work together to combat illegal logging and other unsustainable practices, and ... implement programs to improve forest management and give people a stake in the preservation of the forest, by providing them with sustainable forest based livelihoods.

My colleagues have provided excellent overviews of how the CBFP has evolved since its unveiling at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002. The CBFP includes a number of governments, donors, NGOs and corporate groups. USAID's Central African Regional Program for the Environment (CARPE) is the primary implementation vehicle for the U.S. contribution to the CBFP.

With the Committee's indulgence, I would like to focus today on three main areas: 1) CARPE as the foundation for a strong effective partnership; 2) a review of steps taken to date including those in the area of selecting implementing entities; and 3) an outline of the steps to come.

The priorities of the CBFP/CARPE will be to:

- ? Encourage communities in the Congo Forest region to achieve a

sustainable means of livelihood through well-managed forestry concessions, sustainable agriculture and integrated ecotourism programs;

- ? Help African countries develop a network of effectively managed national parks, protected areas and corridors; and
- ? Improve forest and natural resource governance by encouraging community-based management and economic uses of natural resources, combating illegal logging and enforcing anti-poaching laws.

CBFP activities will be linked to the conservation of 11 key landscapes in 6 countries in Central Africa. Landscapes are ecologically significant areas, some of which have been officially designated as national parks, and the outlying area.

A list of illustrative activities includes: training for rangers and game scouts; support for the development of community enterprises linked to landscape conservation; support for the adoption and strengthening of legislation related to natural resource management, including protected areas and forestry; support for regional processes for communication, collaboration and policy coordination; large-scale monitoring of forest access, land use and deforestation using remote sensing technologies; and the dissemination of materials that help provide citizens with information to participate in natural resources governance.

USAID will stress the importance of working with three African regional institutions: Conference of Ministers in charge of Forests in Central Africa (COMIFAC), the Conference of Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems (CEFDHAC), and the American Timber Organization. The USG, together with the partners in the CBFP, is now in a better position to support the aspirations of the African people in the region. Working together we can all make a big difference on the wide range of problems threatening the environment in the Congo Basin.

The USG proposes to invest up to \$53 million over four years (2002-2005) of which approximately \$48 million will be provided by USAID through CARPE in FY02-05. The combination of the CBFP facilitation process and the field-based USAID CARPE management affords us an excellent mechanism to ensure that the USG resources are serving the most critical needs and are efficiently and effectively being spent on achieving results.

I agree with my colleagues that the foundation for the future of the Congo River Basin is the extraordinary role played by Conservation International (CI), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in focusing

both public and private sector attention on the needs and opportunities of the environment in the Congo Basin. These partners are proving critical to the launch of the partnership.

Another key component of the CBFP is the past work of the partners in CARPE, USAID's most prominent natural resource management programs in Africa. CARPE was launched in 1995 with the initial purpose "to identify and begin to establish the conditions and practices required for the conservation and sustainable use of the natural resources of the Congo Basin, in a manner which addresses local, national, regional and international concerns." In so doing, CARPE helped to fill a major void by collecting important data on the Congo Basin. For the past seven years, CARPE has received annual USAID funding of \$3 million to address environmental needs in nine countries in the region.

CARPE has been active at a time of intense interest in the rainforests of the Congo Basin. At the same time, the international community has become far more aware of the Basin's importance in a global context, whether by providing a potential source of forest products or absorbing carbon dioxide. Conservation efforts and scientific studies, partially supported by funds from CARPE, have opened a window into a part of the world previously very poorly understood.

African governments, meanwhile, have become much more attentive to the forest; improving laws and institutions that manage it, and at the same time granting extensive concessions to log it. This emphasis on logging has been a response to increasing global demand for tropical timber. Those who live and derive their livelihoods from the forest are faced with increasingly difficult economic times, and have relied on the forest to deliver them more and more benefits in ways that may not be sustainable.

CARPE emphasized four subject themes: 1) improving logging policy and practice; 2) enhancing protected areas within a lived-in landscape; 3) encouraging better environmental governance; and 4) strengthening local resource management systems. These themes are in turn supplemented by three cross-cutting principles (promoting monitoring processes; improving training and institutional strengthening; and ensuring donor coordination). Generally, these themes have provided a sound framework for organizing the work of the partners. The results of the program are summarized in a document entitled, "Results and lessons learned from CARPE Phase I," which we would be happy to provide to the Committee.

Allow me to provide you with some examples of the activities that CARPE partners are implementing.

Improving logging policy:

WCS has undertaken ground-breaking work in northern Republic of Congo (ROC) working closely with CIB (Congolaise Industrielle des Bois), a European logging company, to improve its practices. Collaboration between logging companies and NGOs is new in the area and is proving to be a promising partnership.

Enhancing protected areas:

Protected areas have been the principal domain of WWF (in Central African Republic (CAR) and Gabon) and WCS (in ROC and Gabon).

Encouraging better environmental governance:

The conservation community in the Basin has found a role in causes such as reducing bushmeat consumption, a practice that threatens species, disturbs ecosystems and spreads disease. Community management of local forests (once exclusive to the national government and well-placed expatriate logging firms) has attracted a groundswell of attention in Cameroon. These and other examples around the Congo Basin indicate that, despite a period of significant physical insecurity in the Basin (ROC, CAR, and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)), the people and their governments are concerned about the deterioration of their environment and want to take action to halt this trend.

Strengthening local resource management:

Local resource management systems have been addressed by a number of partners, most notably Innovative Resources Management (IRM) in its work in Cameroon. This work has encouraged Africans to feel a sense of "ownership" of the forest. A number of small-grant holders have also done interesting and useful work, though all on a modest scale.

Monitoring the forest through use of remote sensing techniques has been carried out and has generated productive collaboration between partners, as well as a good interchange between the US and field-based workers. It provides quantitative data capable of informing predictions and policy decisions.

CARPE has funded some excellent regional training initiatives, as well as funding capacity-building grants to local NGOs, which have displayed potential. These activities have mainly been in those countries where CARPE has a field presence.

In sum, CARPE and its partners have worked with great cost-efficiency to deliver a complex, flexible and imaginative contribution to forest conservation in the Congo Basin. That work has served to assure us that this recent significant increase in funding is based on tested methods, reliable data and experienced partners and will produce identifiable results.

It is essential to an effective partnership that there be a blending of the strengths of CARPE with the new emphases of CBFP. In developing the overall design document for CARPE, USAID consulted extensively with a broad NGO community (October 16-17, 2002) and with interested USG agencies (December 12, 2002) and formally approved the new CARPE Strategic Objective design document on January 17, 2003.

Furthermore, USAID is now emphasizing a transition for CARPE, moving from “learning lessons” to applying these lessons to action on the ground. In order to facilitate this change in strategy, in January 2003, USAID relocated CARPE management from USAID headquarters in Washington to the Congo Basin (USAID/Kinshasa, DRC). We believe that this change will greatly strengthen our presence in the Basin, affording many more opportunities to interact with all partners in assessing and addressing problems and opportunities on the ground.

USAID also broadly and extensively involved the interested USG agencies in developing the detailed criteria by which each technical proposal would be judged. These agencies include the State Department, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, the National Parks Service and NASA. The criteria fall into four broad categories: 1) technical criteria that are directly related to the specific results described in the Strategic Objective document; 2) management criteria that demonstrate strong and formal partnerships at several working levels; 3) geographic criteria that demonstrate a balanced approach across geographic zones and national boundaries; and 4) a clear demonstration and commitment to mobilizing non-USG financial and material resources that complement and match the USG financial contribution.

USAID has already taken important action to support those entities which will implement conservation programs in the Congo Basin. Using the “Leader with Associates” cooperative agreement process to take advantage of competed agreements already in place, USAID has requested applications from four major U.S. environmental NGO’s and is currently in the final stages of reviewing these applications. Critically important in these applications will be evidence that the NGOs have secured cooperation from the host government in the development of field activities as well as evidence that other NGOs active in selected landscapes can partner in field implementation. A portion of the funding will also support

certain US Government agencies with specific strengths that complement the conservation NGOs. Our intent is that all fiscal year 2003 funding will be put in place for our implementing partners by September 30, 2003 so that they can proceed expeditiously.

As we look to the future, we realize that there are special opportunities to address environmental issues in the eleven landscapes that will be the particular emphasis of USG resources within the CBFP. We intend to ensure that the focus of CARPE will be on producing identifiable results within those landscapes which will be reported back to Congress.

Thank you for supporting the Administration's request and for your continued support of the Administration's efforts to promote conservation and sustainable resource management in the Congo Basin. In order to ensure that the USG's resources make a difference, we must respect the fact that this effort depends upon the people living in the Congo Basin to achieve a lasting, positive impact on the second largest tropical rainforest in the world. We have every intention of making that a high priority.

I thank the Committee for drawing attention to this important Administration initiative and I look forward to taking your questions.