To: The European Commission and the Ministers of the Development, Environment and Foreign Affairs of the Governments of France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, South Korea and the UK

- French Minister of the Ecological Transition, Barbara Pompili
- French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Yves Le Drian
- German Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Svenja Schulze
- German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Gerd Müller
- German Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, Heiko Maas
- Netherlands Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, Stef Blok
- Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sigrid Kaag
- Netherlands Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Tom de Bruijn
- Norwegian Minister of Climate and Environment Sveinung Rotevatn
- Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Søreide
- Norwegian Minister of International Development Dag-Inge Ulstein
- South Korean Minister of Environment, Han Jeoung-ae
- South Korean Deputy Minister of Environment (Climate Change Policy Bureau) Ms Siyum Lee
- South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs, Chung Eui-yong
- UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Rt Hon George Eustice MP
- UK First Secretary of State and Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Rt Hon Liz Truss MP
- UK Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Kwasi Kwarteng
- European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius
- European Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta Urpilainen
- European Vice-President for a Stronger Europe in the World, Josep Borrell Fontelles

Cc:
- Head of the Secretariat of Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI), Berta Pesti
Re: Imminent threat to the Congo Basin rainforest from the lifting of the DRC moratorium on new logging concessions

We are writing to express our alarm at the imminent lifting of the moratorium on the allocation of new logging concessions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), following the adoption by the Council of Ministers of a plan proposed by Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development Eve Bazaiba.

We call on you, international partners of the DRC government through the Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) and other aid programmes, to act swiftly to stop this grave threat to the world’s second-largest rainforest and its people.

We take this step after several leading international environmental and human rights groups wrote to your in-country representatives on August 26, outlining how opening up some of the world’s last remaining intact tropical forests to industrial logging would be an unmitigated disaster for the climate, biodiversity, rule of law, and human rights of forest communities.

Any lifting of the ban, which could imperil an area of tropical forest the size of France, may also increase the risk of future outbreaks of zoonotic diseases such as Ebola and possibly COVID-19.

This plan comes just as several of you are ramping up commitments to protect the Congo Basin forest involving hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars. Failure to act now would be a serious betrayal of tens of millions of rural Congolese whose rights will be impacted, as well as the Paris climate goals and global efforts to agree on an ambitious post-2020 biodiversity framework. At a time when the world is experiencing increasingly severe climatic events and teeters on the brink of a sixth mass extinction of species, your silence now would send a completely wrong message ahead of negotiations at Glasgow and Kunming.

At the start of a decade the international community has pledged to devote to ecosystem restoration, the DRC is about to kick off an era of ecological degradation on a horrifying scale. Any expansion of industrial logging there would also undermine several initiatives supported by your governments to protect tropical forests, such as the proposed EU law on imported deforestation commodities, as well as the promotion of community forestry in the region.

CAFI and its members must make the signature of any new agreement with the DRC government conditional on a binding commitment to extend the moratorium until such time as:
● The existing logging industry has been demonstrably brought under control through the cancellation of all illegal titles and the publication of beneficial ownership of concessions.

● There has been a transparent and credible assessment of forest governance in DRC against the ProFor/FAO Forest Governance Framework, that an action plan has been put in place to address deficiencies found in this assessment, programmes developed and implemented to fulfil the action plan, and substantial progress has been made against the framework, determined through a later subsequent assessment.

● There is clarification and strengthening of what is required to fulfil the 2005 legal condition for the lifting of the moratorium regarding geographical programming of future concession areas so that it involves participatory and multisectoral land-use planning and is consistent with other CAFI-supported reforms.

Signatories:

Kenneth Nana Amoateng, AbibaNsroma Foundation
Harrison Nnoko Ngaaje, AJESH (AJEMALEBU SELF HELP)
Gustavo Sánchez Valle, AMPB (Alianza Mesoamericana de Pueblos y Bosques)
Blaise Mudodosi, APEM (Actions pour la Promotion et Protection des Peuples et Espèces Menacés)
Wolfgang Kuhlmann, ARA, Germany
Annette Lanjouw, Arcus Foundation
Dr. Angela Meder, Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe
Almuth Ernsting, Biofuelwatch
Jettie Word, The Borneo Project
Théophile GATA DIKULUKILA, CAGDFT (Centre d' Appui à la Gestion Durable des Forêts Tropicales)
Sylvain Angerand, Canopée
Tamara Stark, Canopy
Samuel Nguiffo, Centre pour l'Environnement et le Développement (CED)
Peter Lukamba, Congolese Resources Institute (CRI)
Patrick SAIDI HEMEDI, DGPA (Dynamique des Groupes des Peuples Autochtones)
Sam Lawson, Earthsight
Cath Long, Forest Peoples Programme
Evelyn Schönheit & Jupp Trauth, FÖP (Forum Ökologie & Papier)
Friedrich Wulff, Forum Environment and Development
Randy Hayes, Foundation Earth
Ariel Rogers, Friends of Bonobos
Julien MATHE WA MUHIMA, GASHE (Group d'Action pour Sauver l'Homme et son Environnement)
Irène Wabiwa Betoko, Greenpeace Africa
Jo Blackman, Global Witness
Deborah S. Rogers, Initiative for Equality
Maarten Visschers, Leefmilieu
Danielle van Oijen, Milieudefensie
Joshua Castellino, Minority Rights Group International
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Cécile Ndjebet, REFACOF (Réseau des Femmes Africaines pour gestion Communautaire des Forêts)
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François BILOKO, Réseau CREF (Réseau pour la Conservation et la Réhabilitation des Écosystèmes Forestiers)
Klaus Schenk, Rettet den Regenwald e.V. - Rainforest Rescue
Patrick KIPALU KONGO, Rights and Resources Initiative
Barbara Davies-Quy, Size of Wales
Allen Hershkowitz, Sport and Sustainability International
Konrad Rehling, Südwind
Francisco Ferreira (President of the Board), ZERO - Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável