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DR Congo Wetlands Governance and Management Profile

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Document Sheet

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 About Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo, commonly known as DRC was formerly known as Zaire and it is the third largest country in Africa and the largest Francophone country in the African Continent. The country has an area of 2,267,048 Square Kilometers of land and approximately 77,810Km² is covered by water. DRC has over 200 different ethnic groups and a population of approximately 80 Million People with less than 45% of the inhabitants living in Urban areas and the rest in Rural and Semi Urban areas. DRC is located in Sub Saharan Africa and it is bordered by Republic of the Congo to the North West, Sudan to the North Eastern Side and by Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi to the East. It lies between latitudes 6⁰N and 14⁰S and Longitudes 12⁰W and 32⁰E. The Country receives the highest frequency of thunderstorms in the world and it also gets very high precipitation.

1.2 Wetlands of DRC

The DRC has got huge freshwater reserved in rivers, lakes and wetlands estimated at least 6.4% of the national territory (ie 150 922 km² on the 2 345 409 km² of the country). The DRC is illustrated by different wetlands, some of which are still poorly described: torrents, waterfalls, saltwater springs, underground cave systems, forests, tropical rivers, rapids, vast wetlands, tropical peat bogs and large lakes, etc.

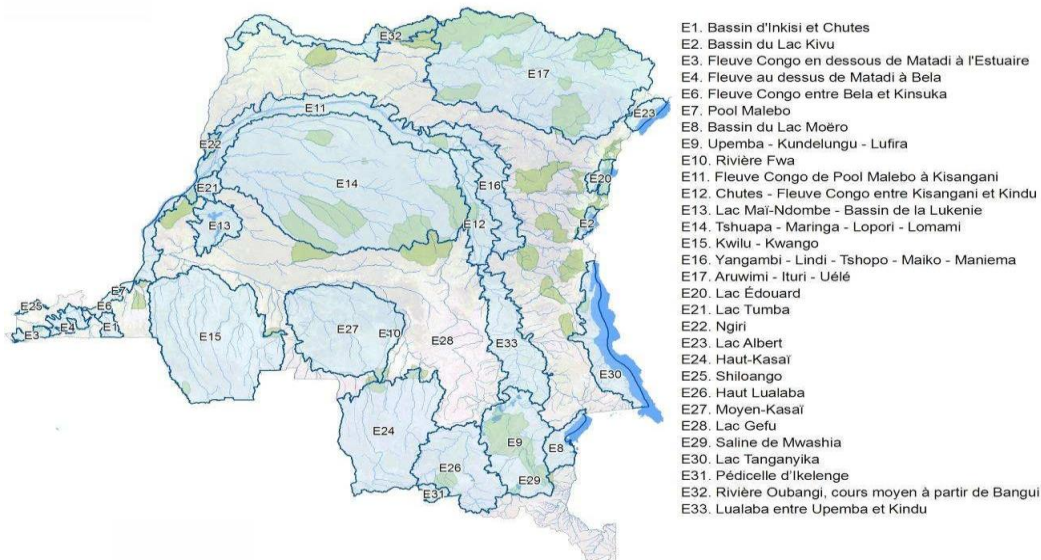
The relative stability of the Congo Basin over a long period, the quantities of rain that poured into it, the variety of topography and aquatic habitats that exist and remain unknown in this huge territory, as well as the prolonged isolation of certain sectors by the falls and the rapids, which would have settled there followed by the disappearance of the immense interior lake which would have occupied during the geological times all the central basin, allowed

particularities in this region that are not found elsewhere. There has been evolution of endemic flora and fauna related to freshwater, which remains unexplored. Despite more than 700 fish species described in these freshwater environments, new species are discovered every year.

In the absence of a truly detailed mapping of the various priority habitats of the wetlands allowing a precise knowledge of these environments, the DRC has made a delimitation carried out on the basis of the identification of major wetland habitats and aquatic ecosystems, resulting from a spectral and temporal analysis of 366 daily images at 1km² of spatial resolution, acquired throughout the year 2000 by the VEGETATION sensor of the SPOT satellite. In addition, gallery forests and mangrove forest are estimated at 0.19 and 0.04% of forest area.

1.3 National and Transboundary Wetlands of DRC

The Democratic Republic of Congo is endowed with a myriad of wetland ecosystems which provide essential goods and services to the local communities which depend on them and to the environment. The Map below shows their names and locations in the DRC.



Democratic Republic of Congo Wetlands

The Democratic Republic of Congo as one of the countries in the Nile Basin, has the following wetlands associated with River Nile' The Lake Albert Swamps located in Bunia town; Lake Edward on the Kazinga Chanel in Lubero which is a Key staging, feeding, breeding areas for migratory water bird species, it is also part of the Rift valley that is a key migratory route for wetland birds as it supports over 20000 water bird species. It also has an estimate of over 60 endemic species of haplochromine cichlids; and the Semiliki River also located in Bunia town.

1.4 Transboundary Wetland Ecosystem Goods and Services

1.4.1 Wetland Flora

Cyperus papyrus and *Phragmites mauritianus* dominate the riverine and delta swamps, reaching heights of 5 m. Much of the unflooded lower valley floor is covered by Themeda savanna, and this, saline hydromorphic soils support vast swards of *Sporobolus spicatus*. Elsewhere, seasonally inundated soils are covered by species of *Hyparrhenia*, *Loudetia* and *Pennisetum*, with *Pennisetum purpureum* and *Imperata cylindrica* representing post-cultivation grasses. The former occurs on the wettest soils, the latter on drier fringes subject to fires. Gallery forests contain a spectrum of typical D.R. Congo species, together with some of more East African affinity.



1.4.2 Wetland Fauna

The fish fauna comprises cichlids, non-cichlid species and many other species. Among the reptiles, crocodiles are believed to have become extinct in regions like Semliki as a consequence of intensive hunting.

Birds are prolific and diverse, the spectrum changing abruptly at the transition from tropical closed forest to savannah, and finally to marshland at the delta. The range of piscivores from the latter sites includes pelicans, herons, ibises, gulls, fishing eagles, ospreys, skimmers, darters, cormorants and kingfishers, while the rare yellow papyrus warbler, *Chloropeta gracilirostris*, has been recorded from the lower Semliki, together ducks, geese, moorhens, weavers and a variety of other warblers.



Mammalian populations along the Semliki River are large and species found in these areas include *Aonyx capensis*, *Atilax paludinosus*, *Cephalophus* sp., *Damaliscus lunatus*, *Dasymys* sp., *Herpestes ichneumon*, *Hippopotamus amphibius*, *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*, *K. kob*, *Loxodonta africana*, *Lutra maculicollis*, *Osbornictis piscivora*, *Phacochoerus aethiopicus* and *Syncerus caffer*.

2.0 POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Policy Framework

2.1.1 National Policy of Water Resources and Sustainable Management

This policy was drawn up with strategic axes aimed at the creation of a favourable environment as outlined in (Axis 1), the establishment of a system of quantitative monitoring and quality of water resources and risk prediction (Axis 2), the protection of Water Resources and the ecosystems that depend on them (Axis 3), the consideration of gender and indigenous peoples (Axis 6), the management of international waters and international cooperation (Axis 7).

2.2 Legal Framework

1. The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo of February 18, 2006 which guarantees the right to a healthy environment and provides for the classification of public spaces for reasons of conservation;
2. Law No. 11/009 of 09 July 2011 on basic principles relating to the protection of the environment;
3. Law No. 14/003 of 11 February 2014 on the conservation of nature;
4. Decree No 10/15 of April 10, 2010 establishing the Congolese Institute of Nature Conservation (ICCN) and conferring upon it the following mandates: Ensure the protection of fauna and flora; Promoting biodiversity by promoting scientific research and facilitating ecotourism activities in accordance with the legislation into force in respecting fundamental conservation principles; Conduct studies and disseminate them for scientific and educational purposes in the field of conservation;
5. National Action Plan for the Sustainable Management of Marine and Coastal Environmental Resources of the Democratic Republic of Congo, MEDD-RDC, 2010;

6. National Strategy for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Protected Areas of the DRC, ICCN, 2012;
7. Environment, Forests, Water and Biodiversity National Program (PNEFEB) - 2, MEDD-RDC, 2013;
8. Law No. 15/026 of 31 December 2015 on water; Order No. FB / 0030/98 of 19 May 1998 establishing the Direction of Water Resources;
9. Law No. 011-2002 of 22 August 2002 on the Forest Code of the Democratic Republic of Congo;
10. Law No. 082-002 of 22 May 1982 regulating hunting;
11. The Decree of 21 April 1937 on fishing.

3.0 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development

The Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development relies on the National Programme Environment, Forests, Waters and Biodiversity of second generation (PNEFEB-2) which makes the diagnosis and gives the DRC's main strategic orientations in order to protect and manage sustainably renewable natural resources.

Regarding Wetlands in general and Water Resources in particular, the program plans, by 2020, to develop water resources, manage transboundary and marine waters and conserve aquatic ecosystems.

3.2 Congolese Institute of Nature Conservation

This Institute intervenes in the preparation of the institutional framework and the planning of the projects concerning Wetlands. It also has the mandate of Managing Protected Areas in the DRC.

3.3 Direction de la Gestion Forestière et de Chasse (GGFC):

This is a government body which is mandated with setting up procedures and the criteria for wise use of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo, including resources in wetland ecosystems.

3.4 Direction de la Programmation, de la Formation et des Relations Internationales:

This organization is responsible for sectoral studies on different natural resources but especially on forests and forestry resources. It also works to ensure there is a coordinated and harmonious development of environmental activities in the DRC.

3.5 Service Permanent d'Inventaire et d'Aménagement Forestier (SPIAF):

This is the organization which is responsible for the development of management plans to guide the sustainable utilization of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

3.6 Civil Society Organizations and the Private Sector

Civil society has become a political force in DRC. Organizations within civil society are involved in every aspect of life in DRC. In the realm of environment and conservation of the nature, there are national and international NGOs that operate in DRC. National NGOs are organized into large working platforms. Environmental NGOs operate within the Réseau d'Organisations non-gouvernementales du Secteur de l'Environnement (ROSE), and all NGOs are obliged to be registered with the MECN. The private sector in the DRC also invests in the conservation of the Environment they operate in or affect by their activities and give donations for environmental protection, including the protection and conservation of wetlands.

4.0 WETLANDS RELATED INTERNATIONAL TREATIES TO WHICH THE COUNTRY IS A SIGNATORY

1. Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1974)
2. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1995)
3. Convention on International Trade in endangered Species of wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (1983)
4. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (1997)
5. Ramsar Convention 1971 and Protocol 1972 (1998)
6. Agreement on the Conservation of African- Eurasian Migratory Water birds (1999)
7. Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (2000)
8. The Kyoto Protocol (2005)
9. The Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaboration which has the mandate of ensuring strategic, transboundary collaborative management of the greater Virunga Landscape.

5.0 MAIN CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

5.1 Wetlands Management Challenges

1. Lack of Integrated Management Plans many of the wetlands in the DRC and this makes it difficult to plan for any conservation activities for the wetlands;
2. Lack of resources to implement projects which derails progress in terms of wetlands restoration and conservation and thereby contributing to continued degradation and loss of wetlands in the DRC;
3. The weakness of information systems making it difficult for key wetland stakeholders and conservationists to have any significant knowledge on the status and on-going activities towards conservation and protection of wetlands

4. The weakness of monitoring systems
5. Gaps in knowledge and protection of certain aquatic and wetland habitats and their biodiversity
6. The delay in implementing the Ramsar vision
7. Delay in resource mobilization and capacity building

6.0 KEY WETLANDS MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Trilateral Memorandum of Understanding between the three Protected Areas Authorities on the Collaborative Conservation of the Central Albertine Rift Transboundary Protected Area Network.
2. Designation of Four Ramsar Sites in the Country and working towards their conservation in collaboration with key stakeholders
3. Development of Wetlands Management and Development Plans for the various wetlands of the DRC

7.0 PAST AND ONGOING WETLAND PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

1. Integrating Research and Wise Use in four Wetlands Ecoregions of West Africa, funded by the Wetlands International (WI) West Africa Programme and executed by the African Women for the Sustainable Development (REFADD)
2. Building capacity and involving local communities for participatory management of wetland ecosystems and associated goods and services
3. Promoting the conservation and use of wetlands rationally through local, national and regional actions and through international cooperation to contribute to sustainable development;

4. Promoting synergy among stakeholders and harmonize cross-border management through the exchange of views and experiences;
5. Raising awareness among national and international communities of the importance of unique biodiversity and diverse human cultures of this landscape

8.0 EXPERIENCE CONCERNING GOOD WETLANDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

1. Training and capacity building on Wetlands Restoration and Sustainable Utilization
2. Establishment of a weather and rainfall forecast centre for better Water Resources Management Especially in the face of climate change and associated effects on wetland ecosystems.
3. Exchange of experiences in the field of agriculture, livestock and irrigation (Bateke Plateau, Congolese site of the Nile Basin)
4. Conducting Rapid Inventory on Wetland Ecosystems to document the State of Wetlands in the Democratic Republic of Congo.



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Nile Basin Initiative Secretariat
P.O. Box 192
Entebbe – Uganda
Tel: +256 414 321 424
+256 414 321 329
+256 417 705 000
Fax: +256 414 320 971
Email: nbisec@nilebasin.org
Website: <http://www.nilebasin.org>

Eastern Nile Technical Regional
Office
Dessie Road
P.O. Box 27173-1000
Addis Ababa – Ethiopia
Tel: +251 116 461 130/32
Fax: +251 116 459 407
Email: entro@nilebasin.org
Website: <http://ensap.nilebasin.org>

Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary
Action Program Coordination Unit
Kigali City Tower
KCT, KN 2 St, Kigali
P.O. Box 6759, Kigali Rwanda
Tel: +250 788 307 334
Fax: +250 252 580 100
Email: nelsapcu@nilebasin.org
Website: <http://nelsap.nilebasin.org>

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