New Maps Show The Congo Basin is the Epicenter of Oil and Gas Expansion Threats to Tropical Forests in Africa, and Likely the World.

Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt - According to a new report, Congo in the Crosshairs, oil and gas expansion in the Congo Basin is a rapidly accelerating existential threat to the global climate, and to the world’s second largest rainforest – along with the tens of millions of people who live there. A comprehensive mapping and analysis of oil and gas blocks in Africa and within the Congo Basin show that:

- Despite the need to end oil and gas expansion globally, the area of land allocated to oil and gas production on the African continent is set to quadruple.¹
- Oil and gas exploration blocks overlap 30% of dense tropical forests in Africa, of which 90% are in the Congo Basin.²
- In the Congo Basin, over 180 million hectares of dense tropical forests still remain and over 35% of these critical forests, or 64 million hectares (an area nearly twice the size of Germany), now overlap with existing or planned oil and gas blocks.
- Over 150 distinct ethnic groups call the Congo Basin home and over 35 million people, or 20% of populated places in Congo Basin countries³, are now in existing or designated oil and gas blocks.
- A close examination of oil development that has already occurred in the DRC and also in Nigeria reveals disastrous impacts on the health, livelihoods and human rights of local communities and is a cautionary tale for the Congo Basin.
- There is still time for African nations and the international community to chart a different path that advances economic well-being while protecting critical forests and the communities that depend on them. Key investments include unlocking the continent’s vast potential in renewables and scaling up direct support to forest communities and other frontline forest defenders.

The current exploitation plans for oil and gas in DRC’s forests would have major implications for global efforts to limit global warming to within the threshold of 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. Yet DRC’s international partners have so far fallen short on addressing the threat to this vital carbon sink. There is still time for African nations and the international community to change course, but meaningful action must be taken now if there’s any hope of protecting critical forests and the communities that depend on them.

Map Infographics Available for Use Linked Here
Images Available for Use Here
Draft Report Here
Final Report Links: English / French
(that will be functional at 11:30am GMT +2 on Nov 10)

¹ Based on analysis showing existing production blocks covering 9.5% of total land area and proposed oil and gas blocks at 37.7%.
² For the purposes of this report the Congo Basin refers to the dense tropical forest covering six Central African countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon.
³ Based on gridded population total of of over 183 million people.
“This report lays bare the stark threat that oil and gas expansion poses to the Congo Basin forest and its millions of inhabitants least responsible for the climate crisis. Achieving climate justice for them means polluting countries in the global north stepping up to rapidly decarbonise their own economies and supporting rainforest countries to transition to a low-carbon future.” said Joe Eisen, Executive Director of RFUK.

**Congo in the Crosshairs** is being released during COP 27 – the international gathering of world leaders designed to address the climate crisis. It offers a stark reality check regarding the threat that oil and gas expansion plans pose to the continent’s critical forests and Indigenous and local communities.

“We must not let a chaotic expansion of fossil fuels in the Congo Basin risk our precious tropical forests, biodiversity hotspots such as the Virunga National Park and the rights and livelihoods of forest communities who are already feeling the impacts of climate change. With its vast potential in renewable energies, DRC can lead the way to a prosperous green future.” said François BILOKO, General Secretary of Réseau CREF, a leading environmental network in DRC.

The report also presents a range of solutions including:

- Transition away from oil and gas by unlocking the abundant potential of renewable energy in the region, promoting investments in distributed energy sources (small-scale hydro, wind, solar, etc.4)
- Invest in transparent, well-regulated, sustainable and equitable supply chains for minerals that will fuel the renewable energy transition (e.g. cobalt and lithium), ensuring that processing facilities and other value chains remain in the Congo Basin countries.
- Mobilise significant technical and financial support from the G20 economies, including via a carbon windfall tax to support climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts and by leveraging debt held by foreign governments, banks, and other creditors conditioned on keeping fossil fuels in the ground, trees standing and expanding Indigenous and local community forest and land rights.
- Create and implement National Adaptation Plans in order to pursue Loss and Damage resources through international financial mechanisms designed to ensure industrialised economies pay their dues to countries bearing the brunt of climate change related costs.
- Ramp up financial support for the protection of forests and peatlands and expand direct support to Congolese civil society organisations, indigenous peoples and other local communities on the frontlines of tropical deforestation so that they may control their own development.5

“What the world needs now are 21st century solutions that put people, nature, and climate stability first. More oil and gas drilling in the Congo Basin means more pollution for local communities and the further degradation of one of the most critical rainforests on the planet. The international community needs to support Congo Basin countries in charting new paths to leave oil and gas in the ground and preserve the rich natural and cultural heritage of the region.” said Tyson Miller, Executive Director of Earth InSight

**Congo Basin Organizations Endorsing Report:**
Actions pour la Promotion et la Protection des peuples et des espèces menacés (APEM), Réseau pour la conservation et la réhabilitation des écosystèmes forestiers (Réseau CREF), Association Paysanne pour la Réhabilitation et protection des Pygmées (PREPPYG), Groupe d’Action pour Sauver l’Homme et son Environnement (GASHE), Centre d’appui à la gestion durable des forêts tropicales (CAGDFT), GeoFirst Development, Ecosystèmes et Développement (EcoDev), Comptoir Juridique Junior (CJJ), Dynamique des Groupes des Peuples Autochtones (DGPA), Forêts et Développement Rural (FODER)

4 [https://congoepela.resourcematters.org/solutions#loc=4.93/-4.41/25.07](https://congoepela.resourcematters.org/solutions#loc=4.93/-4.41/25.07)
About Rainforest Foundation UK

The Rainforest Foundation UK is dedicated to a human rights centered approach to tackling deforestation. Together with its local partners, it supports forest communities to gain land rights, challenge destructive industries, manage their forests and protect their environment. Globally, it campaigns to influence national and international laws and policies that protect rainforests and their inhabitants. Since its inception more than 30 years ago, the Rainforest Foundation family has supported indigenous and other local communities to protect 84 million hectares of forest worldwide.

About Earth InSight:

Earth InSight is a new research organization that focuses on mapping critical threats to ecosystems and the Indigenous people and local communities that call these places home. Through global and regional mapping and research and capacity building efforts, Earth InSight is advancing new levels of understanding and supporting movement efforts to preserve our shared natural heritage for a stable climate and future.

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Media interviews with Congolese partners available upon request via Jak or Ana