

COMMUNIQUÉ

Creation of the Independent Civil Society Committee for Participatory Governance of the Kivu-Kinshasa Green Corridor

Kinshasa, September 30, 2026

The Kivu-Kinshasa Green Corridor (Green Corridor) was established by the Congolese Government in January 2025. It carries a significant ambition: to protect ecosystems, support a green economy, and create new economic opportunities across a vast territory of approximately 544,270 km². Management of the Green Corridor was entrusted to the Virunga Foundation by the Institut congolais pour la conservation de la nature (ICCN). Its launch phase (2025–2028) aims to test projects and investments, as well as the governance mechanisms that will underpin them. At the heart of this experiment is a requirement embedded in the very design of the Corridor: to make the Green Corridor a community-based protected area.

It is precisely within this framework that a Consortium of independently constituted civil society organizations has entered into a collaboration agreement with the Virunga Foundation, manager of the Green Corridor, establishing the Comité indépendant de la société civile pour la gouvernance participative du Couloir Vert (an independent civil society committee for participatory governance of the Green Corridor). The Committee will contribute to building, testing, and monitoring the mechanisms and safeguards necessary to enable local communities to effectively exercise their rights and their power to participate, in accordance with Decree No. 25/01 establishing the Green Corridor and its Charter. This ambition requires that communities be able to participate in decisions that concern them, exercise their rights, give or withhold their consent when required, access effective grievance mechanisms, and directly benefit from the economic opportunities generated by the Green Corridor.

An autonomous space serving a shared ambition

The Committee is neither a management body nor a representative body of the Green Corridor, and it does not substitute for communities or their representative organizations. It is an autonomous civil society space that contributes to the governance of the Green Corridor by ensuring the effectiveness of commitments relating to participation, rights, consent, accountability, and benefits for communities. The Committee will work in dialogue with the Green Corridor ecosystem during its pilot phase: the ICCN, the Virunga Foundation, the relevant national ministries and public institutions, the Unit in the Presidency, decentralized territorial entities, technical and financial partners, civil society, and local communities. This dialogue is necessary for the exercise of the Committee's mandate: the Virunga Foundation undertakes to cooperate with the Committee, provide it with the information necessary for its work, and take its views and outputs into consideration. This cooperation does not undermine either

the Committee's independence or the ability of its member organizations to conduct their own campaigns on issues relating to human rights and environmental governance, including issues related to the Green Corridor itself. The Committee will retain the freedom necessary to monitor, analyze, document, communicate its observations, formulate recommendations, and, when necessary, raise alerts. Its independence is a condition of its contribution to this collective experiment.

Concrete priorities for the pilot phase

During the pilot phase, the Committee will contribute to developing the Participatory Governance Manual, specifying the procedures for informing, consulting, and involving communities, as well as implementing Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Particular attention will be paid to the relationship between FPIC, participatory mapping, public inquiries, and other participation mechanisms. The Committee will also contribute to the development of the grievance mechanism, project eligibility criteria, and monitoring, evaluation, and audit arrangements. It will monitor their effective implementation, including by verifying compliance with project eligibility criteria and the validity of FPIC processes. On this basis, it may issue opinions and recommendations, raise alerts, and report on its observations. It will also ensure that these safeguards are known and accessible to communities, so that they can understand the benefits, risks, and impacts of projects that concern them, deliberate according to their own procedures, and effectively exercise their rights, including their right to refuse when consent is required.

A Committee formed progressively and expected to strengthen its territorial presence

The composition of the Committee has been progressively developed through discussions undertaken since the end of 2024 on participatory governance and the community-based nature of the Green Corridor. It currently brings together Actions pour la Promotion et Protection des Peuples et Espèces Menacés (APEM), Alliance Nationale d'Appui et de Promotion des Aires et Territoires du Patrimoine Autochtone et Communautaire en République Démocratique du Congo (ANAPAC-RDC), la Coalition des Organisations de la Société Civile pour le Suivi des Réformes et de l'Action Publique (CORAP), Congo Green Solution (CGS), 11th Hour Project / Schmidt Family Foundation, Advocates for Community Alternatives (ACA), Rainforest Foundation UK (RFUK), and Université de Mons / EcoAct-Congo. This composition is intended to continue evolving.

The national workshop organized by members of the Consortium in Kinshasa in October 2025 confirmed that this composition constitutes a starting point, not an endpoint. The pilot phase will make it possible to progressively strengthen the Committee's territorial presence, notably through the development of territorial focal points, collaboration with local organizations and platforms, and the growing involvement of local communities and concerned Indigenous Peoples in its work.

Making communities actors in the development of their territories

The community-based nature of the Green Corridor cannot be limited to consultation or benefit-sharing. It must also translate into the ability of communities to define their priorities, exercise their rights, and develop their own initiatives. The Committee will therefore pay particular attention to the conditions that enable communities and their organizations to strengthen and secure community-based forms of governance and management recognized under Congolese law, notably Local Community Forest Concessions (CFCLs), and to access the financing, technical support, and economic opportunities necessary for their development. It will contribute to identifying the obstacles that limit such access and to promoting forms of support adapted to local realities. Particular attention will be given to small-scale producers, local entrepreneurs, and community initiatives.

Essential safeguards for the independence and credibility of the process

The Committee's mission rests on certain essential safeguards: compliance with eligibility criteria and procedures; prevention of serious impacts involving exclusion, impoverishment, or food insecurity; prevention of corruption, money laundering, child labor, and serious human rights violations; effective functioning of grievance and oversight mechanisms; and respect for the Committee's independence. Where significant shortcomings are identified, the Committee may raise alerts, formulate recommendations, and request corrective measures. In the event of serious and persistent shortcomings, it may make its position public and draw conclusions regarding the continuation of its participation in the process. In the interest of transparency, the Committee will regularly publish its updates, decisions, opinions, and recommendations, including through a dedicated website. These safeguards are intended to make the Committee's independence not merely a formal principle, but a real capacity to act on the governance of the Green Corridor.

For the Independent Committee:

Actions pour la Promotion et Protection des Peuples et Espèces Menacés (APEM)

Alliance Nationale d'Appui et de Promotion des Aires et Territoires du Patrimoine Autochtone et Communautaire en République Démocratique du Congo (ANAPAC-RDC)

Coalition des Organisations de la Société Civile pour le Suivi des Réformes et de l'Action Publique (CORAP)

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