



## The WCF organized the first steering committee for the Tai-Sapo Corridor project:



### Press Release

Abidjan, 21 March 2013

Spanning across the Côte d'Ivoire and Liberian border, the Tai-Sapo Forest Complex forms part of the world's 34 biodiversity hotspot and is extremely important for the conservation of numerous endangered species, most notably the rare and endangered Western chimpanzee. The forest is home to various endemic and endangered species such as the red colobus monkey, the pygmy hippopotamus, various exotic species of duikers, and the Liberian mongoose. Overall, this remarkable tropical forest habitat harbors over 1,200 species of flora (300 of which are endemic), over 230 bird species, 145 mammal species, and numerous other rare and endemic species. Some less-studied ecosystems of the complex, notably the aquatic ecosystems, promise still new discoveries of yet unknown species. The Tai-Sapo Forest Complex represents the largest contiguous bloc of tropical rainforest within the Upper Guinean Forest Ecosystem. In Cote d'Ivoire, it consists of the Tai National Park (UNESCO World Heritage Site), a Man Biosphere site, three adjacent classified forests (Cavally, Goin-Débé, Haute-Dodo). In Liberia, it consists of Sapo National Park, Grebo National Forest (>900 km<sup>2</sup> of which is been proposed to be transformed into a national park) and several large forest concessions in Liberia. With the aim of managing the different forest fragments while encouraging connectivity, the two governments have been working together with both local and international actors since 2009 to initiate this transboundary collaboration.

In order to push forward this collaboration, focal members from both countries met on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2013. Focal members are the Office Ivoirien des Parcs et Réserves, the Forestry Development Authority and the Société de Développement des Forêts, as well as NGOs (Wild Chimpanzee Foundation, Fauna and Flora International), and a technical/financial partner (KfW) and the Mano River Union (MRU). An expert in transboundary corridor management from UNEP/GRASP accompanies the whole process. The Committee was supported by observers from Afrique Nature International, Fondation des Parcs et Reserves, GIZ and WWF.

During the workshop the members proposed and agreed on the global vision of the Forest Complex:

*Conservation of biodiversity and participatory sustainable management of natural resources of the ecosystems of the TSFC all the while taking into account the well-being of the local populations*

Today, the pressure to exploit the last natural resources is becoming more and more important in the Protected Areas. As such, the committee addressed the least of immediate threats and the urgent actions that should be implemented to mitigate these threats and protect West Africa's Natural heritage.

During two days, the members of the committee defined the role and function of the steering committee and the technical committees associated to themes regarding legislation, land-use and payment of environmental services as well as the conflict prevention and resolution platform. The main role of the Steering committee is to promote and encourage transboundary collaboration to reach the objectives leading to the global vision.

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