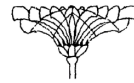




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Capacity Building Program for Scientists from the Democratic Republic of Congo

Three month fellowships for Congolese scientists active in biological and environmental sciences relevant for biodiversity studies and nature conservation.

The **Congo2010Consortium** represents a partnership between the University of Kisangani, the Royal Museum for Central Africa, the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences and the National Botanical Garden of Belgium that aims to stimulate biodiversity research in the D.R. Congo.

This partnership funds nine fellowships to Congolese scientists for 3 months of training in the field of biological and environmental sciences relevant for biodiversity inventory and nature conservation studies in the D.R.Congo. During this period the students will get scientific training in the field they have outlined in their pre-proposal. In addition, the participants will be guided in developing their pre-proposal into a full research proposal. The successful candidates will be assisted in submitting their proposals to international funding agencies. A small **start-up grant** will be provided to allow the applicants to start the activities of their eventually funded research proposal. As part of their training, the students may be offered the possibility to participate in a scientific expedition on the Congo River in 2010. They are also expected to participate in a workshop, co-organised in D.R.Congo, by ERAIFT, during which the knowledge gaps on biodiversity and environmental change issues will be determined, the network of biodiversity expertise in the Congo Basin will be strengthened and a working plan for developing adequate research priorities in this matter will be discussed.

Selection of applicants

A Scientific Committee established under the auspices of UNESCO, will select the fellows based on their pre-proposals

To be eligible, the pre-proposals, written in English, should

contribute to improving the knowledge of the Congo basin biodiversity and environment, including its natural variability, and/or should demonstrate how the research will improve the understanding of the causes of observed variability and change.

The information, knowledge and expertise obtained through the study may contribute to (non-exhaustive list of examples):

- Improving the quantification of the driving forces of changes in the Congo Basin biodiversity resources and systems.

- Reducing uncertainty in projections of how the Congo Basin aquatic and forest biodiversity may be affected in the future.
- Understanding the sensitivity and adaptability of different natural and managed ecosystems and human systems to changes in the natural biodiversity of the Congo Basin.
- Assessing impacts, adaptation and risk management strategies related to the sustainable exploitation of biodiversity and conservation issues.

The intention of this capacity-building program is to contribute to the further incorporation and development of the above reflections. The pre-proposals selected by this program, should display the capacity to lead to financially successful research proposals, managed by Congolese scientists and hosted by Congolese Universities or Research Institutes.

The objectives of the final research proposals developed within this program should therefore:

- Contribute to the knowledge of the biodiversity in DR Congo,
- Enhance the understanding of the impacts and consequences of exploitation of natural resources in the Congo Basin,
- Provide outreach to scientists, policy makers and the general public,
- Create long-term, collaborative research partnerships among Congolese scientists, scientists from other African countries and scientists in developed countries
- Encourage participation of African researchers in international biodiversity related research programs.

Scientists are encouraged to draw upon various GEC Science Plans including the Plan of the African Network for Earth System Science (AfricanNESS)⁽¹⁾, the Plans of the International Council for Science Regional Office for Africa (ICSU RoA)⁽²⁾, the UNESCO Madrid Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves⁽³⁾ and other relevant documents from intergovernmental and multi-lateral organizations.

The **Congo2010Consortium** will only support applications of Congolese scientists who are associated with a Congolese research institute or institution of higher education or with a Congolese non-governmental organization.

Retained applicants receive funding for training at a dedicated Belgian (or other European) University or Research Institute and a start-up grant for their final research proposal. This start-up funding will not exceed US\$5000. The funding is provided by the Flanders-UNESCO-Science-Trust-Fund (FUST), administered by the **Congo2010Consortium**.

Timeline:

Launch call for proposals: March 2009

Closing date call for proposals: April 17, 2009

Selections: April- May 2009

End of selection period: May 31, 2009

Training period: September-November 2009

Workshop in D.R.Congo: December 2009

¹ The africanNESS Science Plan can be found at: <http://www.igbp.kva.se/page.php?pid=412>

² The ICSU RoA Science Plans can be found at http://www.icsu-africa.org/sp_hh_rep_2007.pdf, http://www.icsu-africa.org/hazards_rep_2007.pdf, and http://www.icsu-africa.org/sustainable_energy_rep_2007.pdf

³ The Madrid Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves of UNESCO can be found at <http://www.unesco.org/mab>

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