UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

# Terms of Reference

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Job Opening number* | : | 17-United Nations Environment Programme-XXXX-Consultant |
| *Job Title* | : | **Ecosystem Services Mapping and Decision-Support for the Congo Basin Peatlands.** |
| *General Expertise* | : | |
| *Category* | : | |
| *Department/ Office* | : | UN Environment Programme |
| *Organizational Unit* | : | Ecosystems Division, Biodiversity and Land Branch, Biodiversity, People and Landscape Unit |

## I. Background

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system, and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment.

The Congo Basin peatlands, spanning the Republic of Congo (RoC) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), constitute the world's largest tropical peatland complex. The recently mapped peatlands of the Cuvette Centrale are estimated to be the largest continuous tropical peat complex in the world at 145,000 km², storing approximately 30 gigatons of carbon, equivalent to two years of global greenhouse gas emissions. The Lac Télé/Lac Tumba (LTLT) landscape covers 126,440 km² of the larger Cuvette Centrale peatland and is the focus of this project.

The area is largely pristine and highly biodiverse, containing the highest densities of western lowland gorillas in the world, in addition to bonobos, chimpanzees, and forest elephants. The area contains several protected areas, including Ramsar wetland sites such as the Ngiri-Tumba-Maindombe, the second largest in the world. Nearly two million people depend on the landscape's water, forests, and swamps for their livelihoods.

The DRC and RoC made a strong political commitment towards the sustainable management of natural resources in 2017 by creating the world's largest transboundary Ramsar site in the Cuvette Centrale. In 2018, both countries signed the Brazzaville Declaration on Peatlands, committing to work together to protect the benefits provided by peatland ecosystems. Furthermore, in 2019, UNEA4 adopted a resolution on the Conservation and sustainable management of peatlands.

UNEP, in partnership with FAO, WWF, WCS, UNEP-WCMC, GRID-Geneva, University of Leeds, and other consortium members, is implementing a project to secure the Congo Basin peatlands through evidence-based decision making and good governance. A critical component of this project,

specifically under Output I, Work Package 1.3, is updating and extending existing ecosystem services analyses to produce comprehensive maps of key ecosystem services. This will provide the evidence base for engaging private sector investors and exploring innovative financing mechanisms for sustainable peatland management.

The project is currently developing a high-resolution map of peatland ecosystem extent (Output 4.1), with technical contributions from GRID-Geneva, the University of Leeds, FAO, and other partners. These partners are generating essential technical deliverables, including spatial data, hydrological models, and biodiversity assessments. To maximize the impact and uptake of these outputs, there is a critical need for a local technical organization to receive the deliverables and support the two governments. This organization would help ensure that the data and tools generated are effectively used to inform national decision-making on sustainable peatland management and conservation.

## II. Objective of the Consultancy

The primary objective of this consultancy is to engage a technical organization to:

1. Update and extend existing ecosystem services analyses to produce a comprehensive, wall-to-wall map of key ecosystem services provided by the Congo Basin peatlands, using the updated high-resolution map developed under Output 4.1 and integrating technical inputs from GRID-Geneva, the University of Leeds, and other partners.
2. Act as a bridge between technical data producers and national decision-makers in the RoC and DRC, ensuring that the data generated and tools developed are effectively transferred, understood, and utilised by government institutions for evidence-based peatlands management and conservation.
3. Prepare government institutions in both countries to effectively use the data and apply decision-support tools.

The organization will produce a map of key ecosystem services provided at present by the peatlands, accompanied by an information brief and associated training materials. Critically, the organization will also provide ongoing technical assistance to national institutions to ensure the long-term sustainability and application of project outputs.

## III. Duties and Responsibilities

Under the overall guidance of the Head of Biodiversity, Peoples and Landscapes Unit, and direct supervision of the Workstream Lead, the technical organization will perform the following tasks:

**A. Inception Phase:**

1. **Inception report**: prepare a detailed inception report outlining the proposed methodology, analytical framework, work plan, data sources, stakeholder engagement approach, and a preliminary outline of the final deliverables. This report must be submitted to UNEP for review and approval prior to commencement of the analysis.

2. **Coordination with technical partners**: actively participate in the date working group to establish formal coordination mechanisms with GRID-Geneva, the University of Leeds, FAO,

UNEP-WCMC, GPI, UNESCO and other technical partners to receive and integrate their data outputs, including:

- High-resolution peatland map (Output 4.1) from University of Leeds
- MAPX-SEPAL from GRID-Geneva dn FAO.
- Biodiversity and species data (Output 2.1) from WWF (DR Congo) and WCS (RoC)
- Hydrological models and data (Output 3.1)
- Other relevant spatial and non-spatial data.

3. **Needs Assessment**: conduct a needs assessment with government institutions in both RoC and DRC (Ministries of Environment, Planning, Finance, Water, etc.) to identify their specific data and decision-support needs for peatlands management and conservation.

**B. Ecosystem Services Mapping:**

**1. Identification of Key Ecosystem Services:**

- Identify, describe and prioritize key ecosystem services provided by the Congo Basin peatlands, including but not limited to:
  - Regulating Services: carbon storage and sequestration, water regulation (flood and drought mitigation), water purification, climate regulation
  - Provisioning Services: fisheries, non-timber forest products, water supply, wild foods
  - Supporting Services: nutrient cycling, soil formation, habitat provision
  - Cultural Services: Recreational, spiritual, and cultural values (including those of Indigenous Peoples)
- Consult with stakeholders (government agencies, local communities, Indigenous Peoples, technical experts) to validate the selection of key ecosystem services.

**2. Data Collection and Integration:**

- Collect and synthesise existing spatial and non-spatial data on ecosystem services in the LTLT landscape.
- Integrate the updated high-resolution peatland map (Output 4.1) and other technical deliverables from GRID-Geneva, the University of Leeds, and other partners.
- Apply appropriate modelling and analytical approaches to map the spatial distribution and extent of key ecosystem services.
- Where data gaps exist, identify and apply suitable proxy indicators or modelling approaches.
- Ensure that mapping approaches consider gender dimensions and the differentiated use of ecosystem services by women and men.

### 3. Wall-to-Wall Ecosystem Services Map Production:

- Produce a comprehensive, wall-to-wall map of key ecosystem services provided at present by the peatlands.
- Ensure the map is produced at a resolution suitable for decision-making and stakeholder engagement (compatible with the high-resolution map from Output 4.1).
- Produce the map in a format compatible with GIS platforms and suitable for integration with the MAP-X platform (as referenced in the project document).
- Develop a clear legend, metadata, and documentation for the map.
- Ensure the map is made available on suitable global and national platforms, including UNEP Global Peatlands Map, MAP-X and national platforms in RoC and DRC.

## C. Information Brief and Training Materials:

### 1. Information Brief:

- Prepare a concise information brief (maximum 6-8 pages) summarising the methodology, key findings, and implications of the ecosystem services mapping.
- The brief should be targeted at decision-makers, private sector investors, and other stakeholders.
- Include a clear explanation of the value of ecosystem services and their relevance to sustainable peatland management.
- Highlight opportunities for private sector investment and innovative financing mechanisms.

### 2. Training Materials:

- Develop training materials associated with the ecosystem services map and other technical deliverables, including:
  - Presentation materials (slides) for stakeholder workshops
  - A user guide for the map and decision-support tools (targeting government officials, private sector actors, and civil society)
  - A step-by-step guide on how to interpret and use the map and tools for decision-making.
- Ensure training materials are accessible and tailored to different audiences (technical and non-technical).
- Where applicable, incorporate gender-sensitive approaches in the training materials.

## D. Stakeholder Engagement and Validation:

### 1. Validation Workshops:

- Organise and facilitate validation workshops with key stakeholders (government agencies, private sector representatives, local communities, Indigenous Peoples) to present and validate the ecosystem services map and findings.
- Incorporate feedback received during the validation process into the final deliverables.

- These workshops should be coordinated with the stakeholder platforms established under Output 1.1.

**2. Integration with Private Sector Engagement:**

- Support the project team in using the ecosystem services map as a tool for engaging private sector investors.
- Contribute to the development of targeted briefs and outreach materials (Activity 1.3.2) by providing technical inputs on the ecosystem services values and opportunities for investment.

**E. Government Uptake and Long-Term Decision-Support:**

This is a core and distinguishing function of this consultancy.

**1. Capacity Building and Technical Assistance:**

- Provide sustained technical assistance to government institutions in both RoC and DRC to ensure they can effectively use the data, maps, and decision-support tools developed under the project.
- Conduct targeted training sessions for government officials at national levels on the use of:
    - Ecosystem services map and associated GIS database
    - Peatland monitoring system (Output 3.3)
    - High-resolution peatland map (Output 4.1)
    - MAP-X and SEPAL platform and other relevant tools
- Develop and maintain a helpdesk or technical support mechanism for government users.
- Provide on-the-ground technical support during field missions and stakeholder consultations.

**2. Institutional Embedding:**

- Work with government institutions to embed the use of project data and tools into their routine decision-making processes, including:
    - Land-use planning and management
    - Water resource management
    - Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)
    - National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)
    - Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs)
- Support the integration of peatlands data and tools into national monitoring systems and platforms.

3. **Sustainability and Post-Project Transition:**

- Develop a sustainability and transition plan to ensure that the data, tools, and capacity developed under the project continue to be used and maintained after the project comes to an end.

4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- Document case studies and success stories on how the data and tools have informed specific policy or planning decisions.

## IV. Language Requirements for deliverables

**All deliverables shall be produced in both English and French.**

The Report, the information Brief and training materials must be submitted in two separate, complete, and linguistically accurate versions, one in English and one in French, to ensure accessibility to all stakeholders in the RoC and DRC, where French is the official language, as well as to UNEP's broader international audience. The presentation materials must be prepared in English and French.

The organization is expected to possess native or near-native proficiency in French to produce high-quality deliverables in both languages. The final deliverables shall be reviewed for linguistic accuracy and consistency across both language versions.

| Deliverable | English Version | French Version |
|---|---|---|
| **Inception Report** | ✓ | Optional |
| **Draft Ecosystem Services Map and Information Brief** | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Draft Training Materials** | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Final Ecosystem Services Map and Information Brief** | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Final Training Materials** | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Presentation Materials** | ✓ | ✓ |
| **Sustainability and Transition Plan** | ✓ | ✓ |

## V. Expected Deliverables and Timeline

| No. | Deliverable | Deadline |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | **Inception Report** (English) with detailed methodology, analytical framework, work plan, coordination plan with technical partners, and stakeholder engagement plan, submitted to UNEP for approval. | 1 month |
| 2. | **Draft Ecosystem Services Map** (wall-to-wall) and **Draft Information Brief** (English and French) for review by UNEP and key stakeholders. | 5 months |
| 3. | **Draft Training Materials** (English and French) associated with the ecosystem services map and other decision-support tools. | 6 months |
| 4. | **Validation Workshops** with stakeholders to present and validate the ecosystem services map and findings. | 7 months |
| 5. | **Final Ecosystem Services Map** and **Final Information Brief** (English and French) incorporating stakeholder feedback. | 10 months |
| 6. | **Final Training Materials** (English and French) incorporating stakeholder feedback. | 10 months |
| 7. | **Sustainability and Transition Plan** (English and French) outlining the strategy for ensuring continued uptake and use of project outputs beyond project completion. | 12 months |
| 8. | **Progress Reports on Government Uptake** (English and French) documenting the use of data and tools by government institutions, including case studies and success stories. | Ongoing (every 6 months) |
| 9. | **Final Consultancy Report** (English and French) summarising all activities, capacity building efforts, government uptake achievements, and recommendations for future engagement. | End of contract |

The total duration of the contract is estimated to be 12-18 months, with the possibility of extension to cover the full project period and a post-project transition phase.

## VI. Qualifications and Experience

**The applying organization must demonstrate the following:**

**Institutional Profile:**

- The organization must be a legally registered NGO, technical consultancy or research institution in either RoC or DRC with proven experience in ecosystem services assessment, spatial analysis, natural resource mapping, and decision-support for natural resource management.
- The organization must have a demonstrable track record of working with government institutions in Africa, preferably in the Congo Basin region.
- The organization must have established networks and relationships with key government institutions in the RoC and DRC (Ministries of Environment, Planning, Finance, Water, etc.).

**Technical Team Composition:**
The organization must propose a technical team with the following core competencies:

- **Team Leader:** senior expert with 15+ years of experience in ecosystem services assessment, natural resource management, and policy engagement in Africa. Must have proven experience working with governments.
- **GIS and Remote Sensing Specialist:** advanced degree in geography, GIS, or related field with 10+ years of experience in spatial analysis, remote sensing, and map production.
- **Policy and Institutional Specialist:** advanced degree in public policy, public administration, or related field with 10+ years of experience in institutional capacity building, policy engagement, and government advisory services.
- **French Language Specialist:** the team must include at least one member with native or near-native proficiency in French to ensure all deliverables are produced in both English and French.

**Key Experience Requirements:**

- **Proven experience** in conducting ecosystem services mapping and analysis in tropical landscapes, preferably peatlands or wetlands.
- **Proven experience** in developing training materials and facilitating stakeholder workshops for government audiences.
- **Demonstrated experience** in providing long-term technical assistance to government institutions for data uptake and decision-support.
- Experience working with UNEP, other UN agencies, or international organizations is an asset.
- Knowledge of and experience with ecosystem services valuation, payment for ecosystem services schemes, and/or innovative financing mechanisms is a distinct advantage.
- Familiarity with the MAP-X platform, SEPAL, and other relevant data platforms is an advantage.

**Skills and Competencies:**

- Excellent analytical, research, and writing skills.
- Strong proficiency in GIS and spatial analysis tools (e.g., ArcGIS, QGIS, or similar platforms).
- Ability to synthesise complex spatial and ecological data into clear, actionable products for decision-makers.
- Excellent stakeholder engagement and facilitation skills.
- Strategic thinking and ability to identify practical implementation pathways.
- Demonstrated understanding of the economic and development pressures facing the Congo Basin region and the capacity to identify sustainable alternatives.
- **Excellent proficiency in French is mandatory** (native or near-native level, with proven ability to produce high-quality analytical reports in French).
- Proficiency in English is required (fluent, with proven ability to produce high-quality analytical reports in English).

## VII. Coordination with Technical Partners

The organization is expected to collaborate closely with the following technical partners, who will generate key data and deliverables:

- **GRID-Geneva:** will provide technical inputs on spatial data and the SEPAL, MAP-X platform.
- **University of Leeds:** will contribute data from the CongoPeat project and other research activities.
- **FAO:** will provide support on peatland monitoring, mapping, and capacity building.
- **UNEP-WCMC:** will provide technical support on ecosystem services mapping and biodiversity data.
- **UNEP-DHI:** will provide hydrological models and decision-support tools.
- **WWF and WCS:** will provide biodiversity and livelihoods data from their field operations.
- **Other partners:** as identified during implementation.

The organization shall:

- Establish formal coordination mechanisms with these partners.
- Receive and integrate their technical deliverables.
- Ensure that all data and tools are harmonised and presented in a format accessible to government users.
- Act as the conduit between technical partners and government institutions.

## VIII. Government Uptake and Sustainability Strategy

The organization is required to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for ensuring government uptake and long-term sustainability, including:

1. **Institutional Engagement:** regular engagement with key government institutions at national, provincial, and local levels.
2. **Capacity Building:** targeted training and technical assistance for government officials.
3. **Tool Integration:** support for integrating project data and tools into national decision-making processes and platforms.

4. **Sustainability Planning:** development of a sustainability and transition plan to ensure continuity beyond the project.
5. **Monitoring and Reporting:** regular monitoring of uptake and reporting to UNEP.

## IX. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

| Criteria | Weight |
|---|---|
| **Technical Qualification** | **75%** |
| • Relevant experience in mapping and remote sensing in the Congo Basin region | 20% |
| • Relevant experience in ecosystem services assessment in the Congo Basin region | 10% |
| • Relevant experience in the Congo Basin region | 10% |
| • Experience working with government institutions and long-term capacity building in the Congo Basin region | 10% |
| • Qualifications and technical skills of the proposed team | 10% |
| • Quality of technical proposal | 10% |
| • Demonstrated ability to produce high-quality reports in both English and French | 10% |
| **Financial Proposal** | **20%** |
| • Cost-effectiveness of the proposed fee structure | 20% |

**Title & ID number of programme/project**

| Consultancy Assignment | Project Title | ID Number |
|---|---|---|

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| XXX | Nature Action Pillar | XXX |

## X. Reporting Lines

The organization will report directly to the Workstream Lead at UNEP. The organization will work in close collaboration with the project's technical team, government counterparts, and other stakeholders, including FAO, GRID-Geneva, University of Leeds, UNEP-WCMC, WWF, and WCS.

## XI. Duration of the Assignment

The assignment is for a maximum of **18 months**, with the possibility of extension to cover the full project period (until 31 December 2028).

## XII. Duty Station and Travel

The consultancy will be home-based; however, regular travel to the Republic of Congo and/or the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be required for stakeholder consultations, capacity building, data collection, and validation workshops.

The organization shall be responsible for arranging all travel in accordance with its own internal rules, regulations, and policies. All travel costs, including flights, accommodation, ground transportation, and per diems, shall be included in the organization's financial proposal and budget. The organization is expected to ensure that all travel is conducted safely, cost-effectively, and in compliance with applicable laws and regulations in the host countries.

The organization is expected to have appropriate insurance coverage for its personnel during travel and field missions.

UNEP will provide technical guidance and coordination support for travel, including facilitating introductions to government counterparts and providing necessary project documentation. However, the organization retains full responsibility for the logistical arrangements and management of its personnel during travel.

## XIII. Application Process

Interested organizations are requested to submit the following **in English**:

1. **A detailed organization profile** including legal registration, organizational structure, and relevant experience.
2. **CVs of the proposed technical team**, clearly outlining their qualifications and relevant experience.
3. **A cover letter** explaining why the organization is the most suitable for the assignment, specifically addressing the experience criteria above and demonstrating the ability to produce high-quality deliverables in both English and French.
4. **A technical proposal (max. 10 pages)** outlining the proposed methodology and work plan for achieving the deliverables, including the proposed approach for ecosystem services mapping, government uptake, and sustainability.

5. **A financial proposal** indicating the all-inclusive fee structure (daily rates, total cost, etc.) in US Dollars.
6. **Contact information for three professional references** (institutional references preferred).
7. **Examples of previous work** in ecosystem services mapping and government capacity building (in both English and French, if available).

**Applications should be submitted via the UNEP Partners Portal by 31 July 2026.**

Please note that only shortlisted organizations will be contacted.

## XIV. UNEP Values and Competencies

The organization and its team members are expected to uphold the core values of the United Nations:

## XV. Special Notice

## XVI. Code of Conduct and Ethics