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**THIS ACTION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**ANNEX 2**

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan 2023 in favour of the Republic of Liberia

**Action Document for ‘Protecting a green future: Forestry and Conservation for a sustainable economic development in Liberia’**

**ANNUAL PLAN**

This document constitutes the annual work programme within the meaning of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and action plans within the meaning of Article 23(2) of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

# 1 SYNOPSIS

## 1.1 Action Summary Table

<b>1. Title</b> <b>CRIS</b>  <b>Basic Act</b>	<b>Protecting a green future: Forestry and Conservation for a sustainable economic development in Liberia</b> OPSYS number: ACT-61571 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument ( <u>NDICI-Global Europe</u> )
<b>2. Team Europe Initiative</b>	Yes Team Europe Initiative on Forestry and Biodiversity in Liberia with the participation of France, Germany, Sweden and the European Investment Bank (overall contributions to be confirmed).
<b>3. Zone benefiting from the action</b>	The action shall be carried out in Liberia
<b>4. Programming document</b>	Multiannual Indicative Plan (MIP) 2021-2027 for Liberia
<b>5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results</b>	The proposed Action intends to contribute mainly to MIP objective 1.2) Ensure the effective governance of terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems and biodiversity hot spots. The expected results are: R1.2.a) Strengthen forestry and environment sector governance; R1.2.b) Enhance conservation and restoration of terrestrial, inland, freshwater and marine ecosystems and their services, strengthening the actions against climate change; R.1.2c) Increased governance and law enforcement against illegal wildlife trafficking.
<b>PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION</b>	
<b>6. Priority Area(s), sectors</b>	<b>Priority Area 1 – Enhancing and preserving natural resources for sustainable growth</b> Indicative sectors (310) Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (food and nutrition security, food safety, resources’ management) (410) Environment protection (governance, biodiversity, ecosystem services)

<b>7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</b>	Main SDG (1 only): SDG15 (Life on land) Other significant SDGs and where appropriate, targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SDG1 (No poverty)</li> <li>• SDG2 (Zero hunger)</li> <li>• SDG5 (Gender equality and women's empowerment)</li> <li>• SDG6 (Clean water)</li> <li>• SDG12 (Sustainable Production and Consumption)</li> <li>• SDG13 (Climate action)</li> </ul>			
<b>8 a) DAC code(s)</b>	DAC code 310 (40%) DAC code 410 (60%)			
<b>8 b) Main Delivery Channel</b>	United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) – 41114 Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society – 20000 European Forest Institute (EFI) - 90000			
<b>9. Targets</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
<b>10. Markers</b>  <b>(from DAC form)</b>	<b>General policy objective @</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Participation development/good governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Trade development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with disabilities @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>RIO Convention markers</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Biological diversity @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>11. Internal markers and Tags:</b>	<b>Policy objectives</b>	<b>Not targeted</b>	<b>Significant objective</b>	<b>Principal objective</b>
	Digitalisation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		YES	NO	

	digital connectivity digital governance digital entrepreneurship digital skills/literacy digital services	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Connectivity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity energy transport health education and research	YES <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Migration @ (methodology for tagging under development)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reduction of Inequalities @ (methodology for marker and tagging under development)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>BUDGET INFORMATION</b>				
<b>12. Amounts concerned</b>	Budget line(s) (article, item): BGUE-B2021-14.020120-C1-INTPA  Total estimated cost: EUR 15 000 000  Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 15 000 000  This action is part of the TEI on Forestry and Biodiversity with the participation of France, Germany, Sweden and the European Investment Bank (overall contributions to be confirmed).			
<b>MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION</b>				
<b>13. Type of financing</b>	<b>Direct management</b> through grants <b>Indirect management</b> with UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and EFI (European Forest Institute)			

## 1.2 Summary of the Action

This action is contributing to the Team Europe Initiative ‘Sustainable Forestry and Biodiversity Conservation in Liberia’, which aims at promoting a sustainable economic development in Liberia based on the sustainable use of natural resources and their conservation.

It ties in mainly to the MIP’s priority area 1 (Enhancing and preserving natural resources for sustainable growth), and to specific objective 2.2. It also contributes to priority area 2 (Promoting decent jobs and inclusive growth). It aligns with SDGs 1, 2, 5, 6, 12, 13, and 15.

The Action aims at contributing to environmental protection through sustainable use and conservation of natural resources in Liberia, enhancing interventions against climate change and climate adaptation, and focusing on meaningful job creation and income generation in the forestry sector. It builds on actions that are already under

implementation (VPA/FLEGT<sup>1</sup>, PAPFOR<sup>2</sup>, TVET<sup>3</sup>), which will be reinforced, enlarged and expanded, and will serve as a sound basis for the development of this programme.

As for the component on biodiversity conservation, the Action will continue to support priority landscapes with a focus on improving livelihood conditions of local communities, including through ecotourism. It will also continue to intervene against the illegal trafficking of wildlife. The Action will be implemented at the national level in complementarity and synergy with the regional programmes (NATURAFRICA- West Africa Forest macro landscape) which focus on transboundary landscape levels.

As for the forestry component, the Action will focus on sustainable use of forest resources. It will continue supporting the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) FLEGT implementation (governance) and reviewing current forest management practices towards long term sustainability of commercial exploitation of Liberian forests, also enhancing the development of value chains, in the broader context of the new regulation on the making available on the Union market of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation<sup>4</sup>.

It will promote innovation by joining forestry and conservation activities at community level, like agroforestry, fuelwood plantation, multipurpose tree nurseries and proposing jobs to formalising chainsaw millers.

It will explore the concrete possibilities to manage finance conservation and sustainable forestry especially at community forest level (carbon financing, payment for environmental services, compensations, subsidies).

In this context, the Action will contribute to significant climate change mitigation and adaptation co-benefits by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (reducing degradation/deforestation, among other) and reducing vulnerability of human systems to climate impact.

In the framework of the TEI, the Action will promote complementarity with the Swedish and the French initiatives on community-based forestry and management of protected areas.

By addressing governance, sustainability, protection and restoration of the Liberian forest, this Action has the ambition to lay the first foundations for an integrated forest partnership approach.

The action will also contribute to the implementation of the EU Gender Action plan 2021-2025, GAP III<sup>5</sup>, targeting specifically, the thematic area of engagement 'Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation'. The action also aligns with several EU policies and the EU is committed to helping partner countries achieve the same objectives through its external policies and instruments, including: the European Green Deal<sup>6</sup> in its external dimension, the new EU forest strategy for 2030<sup>7</sup>, the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs), the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030<sup>8</sup> (in particular the NaturAfrica component) and the EU Adaptation Strategy<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Voluntary Partnership Agreement / Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade – Implementation phase in Liberia.

<sup>2</sup> Programme d'Appui à la Préservation des Ecosystèmes Forestiers en Afrique de l'Ouest.

<sup>3</sup> Technical Vocational Education and Training.

<sup>4</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16298-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>5</sup> SWD(2020) 284 final.

<sup>6</sup> COM(2019) 640 final.

<sup>7</sup> COM(2021) 572 final.

<sup>8</sup> COM(2020) 380 final.

<sup>9</sup> COM(2021) 82 final.

## 2 RATIONALE

### 2.1 Context

Liberia is a least developed country in the Gulf of Guinea with a fragile economy and a weak governance structure. In the last 20 years, it has experienced a number of shocks (civil war, Ebola, COVID-19) which have further eroded the ability of the central Government to deliver services to its people. In addition, poor governance is adding to the fragility of the central Government, which has a severe lack of capacity to develop and implement policies. The economy is based on a limited number of commodities either through extraction (iron, gold, tropical timber) or plantations (rubber, palm oil) and therefore subject to extreme shocks on the international markets. The forestry sector is responsible for 10% of Liberian gross domestic product (GDP)<sup>10</sup>.

Liberia still hosts around 40% of the remaining forest from the West African blocks (Upper Guinean Rain Forests) characterised by high levels of rare species. These forests still host the last viable populations of some endangered species like the pygmy hippopotamus, western chimpanzee or forest elephant. amongst others.

Through the National Forestry Reform Law from 2006, the Liberian government committed to the protection of 30% of remaining forests, summing up to a total of 1.4 million hectares of forest. So far, only five protected areas have been established. Provided that the Liberian government remains committed to the establishment of the suggested protected area network<sup>11</sup>, Liberia remains the last hope for the survival of many West African forest species and Upper Guinean endemics.

Most of the Upper Guinean forest system and its biodiversity are threatened by forest degradation and habitat loss due primarily to agricultural encroachment and expansion for subsistence and to a lesser extent commercial purpose.

Additional threats to the landscape include commercial mining and the threat from some commodity plantations (in particular rubber, cocoa and coffee) and major road development, and the associated increased access threats that this will bring. Unregulated hunting and logging are degrading standing forests. The result is a loss of globally important biodiversity and decreased resilience to climate change while local populations lose valuable forest goods and services.

Covering 43% (around 4.2 million hectares) of Liberia's land mass<sup>12</sup>, forests provide vital resources and opportunities in terms of green economy, notably for the rural population, and thus has the potential to contribute to the reduction of extreme poverty. Paradoxically, the lack of adequate road infrastructure has surely avoided further disturbances to vast tracts of the Liberian forests.

Forests of Liberia have been commercially exploited since the decade of 1950, mainly for exporting purposes. The sector has its own specificities and has been traditionally poorly understood by policy makers. Currently responsible for 10% of Liberian GDP, the government expressed intentions to raise the overall contribution of the sector up to 12%<sup>13</sup>.

Around 10,000 people are formally employed and it is estimated that around 20,000 have their income through informal activities within the forest sector<sup>14</sup>. Forest exploitation has focused mainly on extraction and export of raw materials.

The forest cover is receding due to rising needs of the rural population, translated mainly into clearing for agriculture production and, to a lesser extent, for charcoal production.

<sup>10</sup> "Support Mission to the EU Delegation to Liberia" – Final Report 2021 by Forest for the Future Facility.

World Bank. 2020. "People and Forest Interface: Contribution of Liberia's Forests to Household Incomes, Subsistence, and Resilience" - <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34438>.

<sup>11</sup> Liberia aims to establish 5 new Protected Areas to complement the existing PA network and thus increase forest Protected Areas to 1.5 million ha, ensuring a 3km buffer zone, by 2030 (country NDC).

See also National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan-II 2017-2025 (pg. 37 for figures).

See also National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan-II 2017-2025 (pg. 37 for figures).

<sup>12</sup> FLEGT Independent Market Monitor, 2021. Liberia Country profile. <https://flegtim.eu/country-profiles/liberia/>

<sup>13</sup> Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity And Development (PAPD) - (July 2018 – June 2023).

<sup>14</sup> "Support Mission to the EU Delegation to Liberia" – Final Report 2021 by Forest for the Future Facility.

Agriculture is the primary livelihood for about 70% of Liberia's 5.07 million population of which 2.55 million (50.3%) are men and 2.5 million (49.7%) are women<sup>15</sup>. Women are disproportionately grouped in the least productive sectors, with almost 90% of them employed in the informal sector and agriculture (UN Women 2022<sup>16</sup>, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 2018<sup>17</sup>, EPA 2022<sup>18</sup>). Women contribute to the agricultural sector's workforce through food crop production (93%), marketing and trading (85%), and agricultural labor (80%). Women are mainly responsible for the planting, weeding, and harvesting of food while men take care of the brushing, feeling, clearing, and fencing<sup>19</sup>. Additionally, 79% of women working in agriculture are self-employed, 17.3% are employed by a family member, and only 3.7% are employed by a nonfamily member<sup>20</sup>.

In the country women are excelling in roles that were previously reserved for men and are contributing to the conservation of protected areas. More and more women are trained to be Community Ecoguards, a position that has since been perceived as male-dominated.

On account of the precarious economic situation, unsustainable logging practices are on the rise, especially in the Community Forest<sup>21</sup> areas, where governance structures are weak.

The market for timber and timber products is structured in two different threads: formal (feeding the international exports of timber, selling mainly round logs) and the informal (feeding the domestic market with poorly finished products - mainly lumber). In an average year, timber exports can generate an income between USD 7 to 9 million<sup>22</sup>.

Extraction of products for local markets is done with no monitoring, in an unregulated way, hence seriously jeopardising long-term sustainability of Liberian forests. While timber exploitations by the informal sector is poorly documented - with only one formal study providing actual data - estimations are that the informal sector may be extracting 3 to 4 times more volume than the formal sector, which explains why the current deforestation rate is around 2% per year, amongst the highest in the world. Effects of charcoal production and firewood extraction are not assessed by studies but are certainly an additional pressing factor.

Since 2013 the EU and UK FCDO (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) have provided substantial resources (about EUR 15 million) to set up the regulatory and enforcement systems required by to reach FLEGT Licensing as foreseen under Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) between Liberia and the EU.

The past and ongoing support, including the EU funded VPA Support Unit (SU) 2 Project, the EU FLEGT VPA Programme and the FCDO funded Multi-stakeholder Forest Governance and Accountability Project. This support has resulted in major improvements in sector governance, especially in terms of transparency and stakeholders' participation in the formal exploitation. The EU and the Government of Liberia had mutually agreed on an ambitious roadmap<sup>23</sup> for issuing FLEGT licenses by 2020, an objective which failed to be achieved due to lack of political will and a requirement for additional support, mostly in terms of effective enforcement of legality and core regulatory functions.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Joint Implementation Committee (JIC), meeting under the VPA between the Government of Liberia and the EU in March 2022, allowed the political dialogue to advance on these issues, with effective discussion on enforcement, community forestry and legality matrix revision process. The stakeholders also discussed the need for a wider consultation on the sustainability of the forests and the options to achieve it.

<sup>15</sup> <https://countrymetersw.info/> / Proforest (2020)

<sup>16</sup> UN WOMEN (2022) Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile, August

<sup>17</sup> Environment Protection Agency of Liberia (2018). National Policy and Response Strategy on Climate Change. Republic of Liberia.

<sup>18</sup> Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia (2021). Liberia's Second National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia

<sup>19</sup> UN Women, 2022<sup>19</sup>, Ministry of Gender and Social Protection, 2009<sup>19</sup>, FAO and ECOWAS Commission, 2018<sup>19</sup>)

<sup>20</sup> UN Women, 2022<sup>20</sup>, Ministry of Gender and Social Protection, 2009<sup>20</sup>, FAO and ECOWAS Commission, 2018<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Liberia's Community Rights Law (2009) aims to empower communities to engage in the sustainable management of their forests. Under the law, communities can obtain a Community Forest Management Agreement (CFMA) for areas between 5,000 and 50,000 hectares.

<sup>22</sup> "Support Mission to the EU Delegation to Liberia" – Final Report 2021 by Forest for the Future Facility.

<sup>23</sup> FLEGT-VPA between Government of Liberia and EU was ratified and entered into force in December 2013.

Following the 2020 ND Gain Index<sup>24</sup>, Liberia is the 6<sup>th</sup> most vulnerable country worldwide. Climate variability and change are expected to manifest in higher temperatures, more extreme weather events such as heavy rains, and rising sea levels with floods. Climate change is also expected to increase risks and severity of natural disasters in Liberia, through more intense temperatures as well as rainfall patterns, increased temperatures, and prolonged heat waves. Liberia's high vulnerability is linked to its high dependence on 'climate sensitive' sectors such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and energy and mining<sup>25</sup>. Additional contributing factors to the country's vulnerability to climate change conditions include mal-adapted agricultural activities, unsustainable logging practices, and an overdependence on wood biomass leading to high levels of deforestation. Following Climate Watch Data<sup>26</sup>, Liberia GHG emissions are mainly driven by the Land-Use Change and Forestry (almost 86% of total emissions<sup>27</sup>), followed by energy (almost 7%) and agriculture (almost 4%).

#### Link with European and Liberian policies and strategies:

The action aligns with several EU policies/legislations and the EU is committed to helping partner countries achieve the same objectives through its external policies and instruments, including: the European Green Deal<sup>28</sup> in its external dimension, the new EU forest strategy for 2030<sup>29</sup>, the FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs), the new regulation on the making available on the Union market of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation<sup>30</sup>, the Biodiversity Strategy for 2030<sup>31</sup> (in particular the NaturAfrica component), the EU Adaptation Strategy<sup>32</sup> and the EU's Gender Equality Strategy and Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 (GAP III)<sup>33</sup>. In addition, the 2021 EU Country Action Plan (CLIP) for Liberia underscores that by creating investments in the agricultural, fishery and forestry sectors, a boost of Liberia's economy and of job creation opportunities across sectors is foreseen, particularly for Liberia's women and youth.

Liberia submitted its Nationally-Determined Contribution (NDC) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2016 and its Second National Communication to the UNFCCC in 2021. Liberia has also embarked on a Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target setting process under the UNFCCC's LDN Target Setting Programme<sup>34</sup>. These documents provide the platform to integrate its Low Carbon Development Strategy into the country's long-term sustainable development Vision by 2030. Forestry, together with agriculture and fisheries, is instrumental to Liberia's inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction goals. Liberia is also partner of the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD+) and presented its Liberia's Forest Reference Emission Level to the UNFCCC. In its 2021 NDC, Liberia proposes numerous actions to strengthen the forestry and biodiversity sectors in mitigation *and* adaptation. Envisaged actions include, amongst others, the strengthening public entities' capacities, the implementation of afforestation/reforestation actions in degraded areas, the development of watershed management, the development of alternative livelihoods and the establishment of five new Protected Areas. Liberia is part of the UN-REDD initiative since 2008 and has completed important phases of its readiness phase. While largely yet driven by a donor-driven process, Liberia has realised a National Forest Inventory (2021), a National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS), a Forest Reference Level (FREL), and a national REDD+ Strategy that was adopted in 2017. Liberia is also realising efforts to map and account for biodiversity, forest carbon, and non-timber forest products (including bushmeat), implemented via its new action plan on natural capital accounting (NCA) and including its participation in the Gaborone Declaration for Sustainability in Africa.

In 2012, the government of Liberia developed a Climate Change Gender Action Plan (CCGAP) to provide a framework for enhancing gender equality in both climate adaptation and mitigation. The CCGAP considers gender

<sup>24</sup> The ND-GAIN Country Index summarises a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with its readiness to improve resilience (<https://gain-new.crc.nd.edu/country/liberia>).

<sup>25</sup> According to 2020 data, the country's GDP is dominated by the agriculture sector (inclusive of fishing and forestry), which accounts for 42.6% of GDP and the industry sector (including mining, construction, electricity, water and gas), which contributes 11.7% of GDP (Source: World Bank, 2021 Climate Risk Profile).

<sup>26</sup> [Climate Watch Data Country Profile Liberia](#)

<sup>27</sup> Following data from the Global Forest Watch, in 2020 Liberia listed as the 23<sup>rd</sup> most deforested country in the world.

<sup>28</sup> COM(2019) 640 final.

<sup>29</sup> COM(2021) 572 final.

<sup>30</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16298-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>31</sup> COM(2020) 380 final.

<sup>32</sup> COM(2021) 82 final.

<sup>33</sup> SWD(2020) 284 final.

<sup>34</sup> [Liberia LDN TSP Country Report 2019](#)



for decision-making processes, capacity-building activities, and measures to guarantee that global warming and climate change vulnerabilities are addressed with a gender perspective. According to the CCGAP, curbing climate change requires the participation of women in creating processes to adapt to climate change and mitigation strategies.<sup>35</sup>

In 2018, the Government of Liberia launched the National Policy and Response Strategy on Climate Change, and in 2021, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released Liberia's Second National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Both documents highlight the importance of mainstreaming gender - focusing on women, youth, children, and people with disabilities - in planning, decision-making, and implementing climate change responses across Liberia. However, according to the Afrobarometer (2018), awareness about climate change in Liberia is higher among men than women (67% for men in comparison to 41% for women) highlighting their marginalisation and exclusion from processes and strategies to combat climate change along with its negative consequences on the environment and population.

Since the end of the second civil war, the country has adopted and ratified several international treaties, resolutions and protocols while developing and putting into practice national policies and action plans to mainstream gender equality in different sectors. Liberia also has stated that it has a commitment to providing an inclusive society for people with disabilities<sup>36</sup>. In 2005, Liberia created the National Commission on Disabilities.<sup>37</sup> Liberia signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012<sup>38</sup>.

Liberia has various protections for people with disabilities in the workforce. The government also promotes tax incentives for hiring people with disabilities and has a target of 4% employment for people with disabilities.<sup>151</sup>

People with disabilities have received less attention than other groups of people who are at risk in the country.<sup>161</sup>

## 2.2 Problem Analysis

### Short problem analysis:

The action intends to address two main challenges that are hampering effective governance of ecosystems and biodiversity hotspots (priority area 1) and promotion of alternative and sustainable livelihoods from the forestry sector (priority area 2):

1. High deforestation rate and loss of forest species in a biodiversity hotspot, containing the largest area of the Upper Guinean Rain Forests (UGRF) increasing pressure on the most vulnerable populations in Liberia

Liberia is endowed with an abundance of biological and natural resources. Like other developing countries, the country is highly dependent on the exploitation of natural resources for the sustenance of the majority of its rural communities. It is estimated that nearly 700,000 households directly depend on the country's forest resources and agricultural biodiversity for their livelihoods. The agricultural sector in the country employs almost 70% of the population, a majority of which are women and youth (EU CLIP, 2021). Lack of adequate infrastructure has been a major contributor to the protection and conservation of the currently still existing 40% of the Upper Guinean Rain Forest on Liberian territory.

Liberia's total forest area is estimated at 4.2 million hectares, representing about 43% of the total land area<sup>39</sup>.

From 2001 to 2021, Liberia lost 2.05 million hectares of tree cover. The drivers of deforestation and degradation include<sup>40</sup>:

1. Harvesting for fuelwood, charcoal and construction, illegal logging, and wildfires.

<sup>35</sup> IUCN, 2012<sup>35</sup>, UN Women. 2022

<sup>36</sup> "Government of Liberia Committed to Ensuring Inclusive Society--Develops Policies and Programs for People with Disabilities". *Liberia Permanent Mission to the UN*. 11 June 2019

<sup>37</sup> Van Aparen, Faustina (2019-04-04). "Liberia: Trade union actions on decent work for people with disabilities". *PSI*.

<sup>38</sup> SIDA (December 2014). "Disability Rights in Liberia" (PDF). *SIDA*.

<sup>39</sup> FLEGT Independent Market Monitor, 2021. Liberia Country profile. <https://flegtimm.eu/country-profiles/liberia/>.

<sup>40</sup> Global Forest Watch. Country Profile Liberia.



2. Agricultural expansion, particularly for subsistence farming (cocoa) and large-scale oil palm and rubber production.
3. Mining and mineral exploitation (iron ore extraction in the Nimba Hills, for example).

From 2001 to 2021, 0.56% of tree cover loss occurred in areas where the dominant drivers of loss resulted in deforestation, with important impact on biodiversity and water resources<sup>41</sup>.

With the Community Forest Law of 2009, forestry communities are starting to realise the potential of selling assets (in this case logs) to ensure survival and development of their communities. While, in theory, this is a positive and empowering development, the lack of capacities for monitoring and control of the sales contracts with the logging companies has led to a poorly accounted for (only in terms of value of its timber) and highly unsustainable reduction of the forest wealth in community forest areas.

In addition to the timber extraction related challenges, the deforestation rate is putting one of the best preserved hotspots for biodiversity at risk. For decades, Liberia's wildlife has been depleted by the bush meat and pet trade, which makes no distinction between protected and non-protected species. With a legal framework hardly known by citizens and by law enforcement agents or by the judiciary, this trade has put protected species at the risk of extinction. Actions against illegal wildlife trade, including timber, must continue to avoid further erosion of biodiversity values underpinning law enforcement and governance.

Lack of adequate capacity permeates also in the conservation sector. There is an urgent need to support adequate infrastructures in protected areas, operational capacity of Forestry Development Authority (FDA) rangers and law enforcement agents, as well as a research-based decision making in the management of protected areas combined with knowledge creation about international best practices in the conservation sector.

In this context, the actions of the Erasmus+ programme for capacity building in the field of Higher Education and Vocational Education and training will be promoted to strengthen the capacity of the relevant education and training institutions and administration through international cooperation. These developments negatively affect the livelihood conditions of local communities and long-term sustainability of economic growth in Liberia, affecting also Liberia's capability to reduce GHG emissions as envisaged by its NDC and commitment to the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, these developments undermine the efforts to reducing vulnerability to climate change and increasing resilience, both in human and natural systems.

The action will address the root causes of deforestation thereby countering, at the same time, the loss of forest species in a biodiversity hotspot of the UGRF<sup>42</sup>.

2. Unsustainable forest management practices and inadequate governance and political will to ensure long-term economic gains and development from the forestry sector

Current forest management principles are based on the guidelines applied back in the 1950s-60s and have proven insufficient to sustain both the commercial forest exploitation and the development of community forestry in the long term. There is an urgent need to review and restructure the management framework of Liberian forests, if forestry is to provide an economically relevant input based on a long-term commercial exploitation or conservation purpose, including Community forests.<sup>43</sup>

The role that logging companies have been playing is detrimental for progress in the sector. Partly responsible for the wrong decision making by administrators, the private sector is taking advantage of the lack of capacity and of political will within the key government bodies. Additionally, inadequate enforcement of regulations and overlapping mandates between Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Forestry Development Authority (FDA) and Liberia Land Authority (LLA), are creating a business environment enabling operators with short-term strategies and discouraging investments by companies with long-term approaches.

The revision of the nationally determined contributions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement and related Forest Reference Emission levels, as well as Liberia's

<sup>41</sup> Global Forest Watch. Country Profile Liberia.

<sup>42</sup> Upper Guinean Rain Forest.

<sup>43</sup> As per the study on sustainability of forest operations, drafted by the VPASU-2, current management approach does not sustain viable commercial forestry beyond the current cutting cycle (in the next 20-30 years). Based on basic principles of forest management, planning operations need to start today if we want to curve this trend.

commitment to achieving LDN<sup>44</sup> and integrating natural capital accounting into policy and planning, have again created momentum for taking action on protecting the Upper Guinean Rain Forest.

The current support provided for the implementation of the VPA has been instrumental to secure some of the government objectives in the forest sector. However, the VPA process is experiencing some challenges due to the mentioned issues in governance and predominant interests from elites. Additionally, the scope and scale of the needs for institution building is greater than what had been originally anticipated.

The priority areas for this action are mostly related to the completion and consolidation of what has been initiated under the ongoing support in view to ensure long term sustainability. The Government of Liberia has established the institutional set-up required by the VPA and the system to track and trace timber is operational but does not apply yet to the entire scope of the VPA (such as the Community Forestry). Limited human, technical and financial resources have hampered operations and there are still significant capacity and institutional gaps. This action aims at addressing some of these identified constraints and thus consolidates and builds upon the results reached to date. It would also focus on supporting stakeholders to advocate successfully for the necessary remaining regulatory and policy reforms.

It is expected that, once the system is fully operational, Government resources generated from the sector will ensure the long-term sustainability of the institutional set up.

With regard to gender equality and women's and youth's empowerment (in particular persons with disabilities), the 2021 UN Women Gender Country Profile on Liberia identifies a concerning data highlight, sex-disaggregated data on climate change impacts and decision-making processes is not available. Understanding the different impacts of climate change on men and women, as well as their participation in both mitigation and adaptation strategies, is critical since Liberian women are highly vulnerable to environmental hazards, particularly water stress.

**Identification of main stakeholders (duty bearers) and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action:**

The action will try to federate the different duty bearers around the forestry and biodiversity sectors in a holistic and integrated way. The Forestry Development Authority (FDA) created with the mandate to sustainably manage and conserve the forests and related resources of the country is the essential actor with its different departments relating to the VPA implementation process and for the biodiversity conservation.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Liberia is the principal authority for implementing the national environmental policy and sustainable management law for the protection of natural resources in Liberia. Liberia's REDD+ Readiness activities are led by FDA and co-led by EPA. The EPA hosts the National Climate Change Steering Committee (NCCSC) and led both the 2021 NDC revision and ongoing natural capital accounting activities.

In the framework of the VPA implementation and to enhance a multisectorial approach, some Ministries and Agencies will be actively involved in the action (Ministry of Justice, Agriculture, Lands, Mines and Energy, Tourism and Liberia Land Authority).<sup>45</sup>

Civil society remains a very important actor, developing joint actions with the authorities at central and local level, playing an import role on the monitoring of law enforcement and providing support to Community Forest populations.

Private sector will be involved mainly in the forestry sector and also in the touristic sector. Research and Academia will be also be involved with strengthening policy research and evaluation functions.

<sup>44</sup> Land Degradation Neutrality.

<sup>45</sup> December 2021 the Government of Liberia signed MoU for Transparency, Accountability in Forest Sector including Forestry Development Authority (FDA), Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA), Liberia Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (LEITI) and Ministries of Justice (MoJ) and Internal Affairs (MIA), under the banner Inter-Agency Retreat (IAR).

### 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

#### 3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The **Overall Objective** (Impact) of this action is to strengthen the sustainable use of natural resources in Liberia, while contributing to fight climate change and increasing jobs and growth.

The **Specific Objective** (Outcomes) of this action are to:

1. Improve natural resources governance and business environment for sustainable forest-based activities.
2. Strengthen conservation of Liberian biodiversity, focused on biodiversity hotspots and ecological corridors.
3. Increase forest-based revenue and livelihoods.

**The Outputs** to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives (Outcomes) are:

##### **Contributing to Outcome 1 (or Specific Objective 1)**

- 1.1. Improved implementation mechanisms for Voluntary Partnership Agreement related to policy dialogue, regular national stakeholders' dialogue and finalisation of the national Legality Verification System (LVS).
- 1.2. Laws and policies related to business environment for sustainable forest-based activities developed/revised and better implemented.
- 1.3. Enhanced capacity of institutions for enforcing environmental regulations and reduction of illegal wildlife and timber trafficking.
- 1.4. Improved participation of women and girls in all their diversity in decision making processes on forest management.

##### **Contributing to Outcome 2 (or Specific Objective 2)**

- 2.1 Enhanced capacity of national system of Protected Areas to protect Liberian biodiversity and manage Protected Areas and landscapes, including trans-border landscapes.
- 2.2 Conservation Management Models for community lands are promoted and implemented in targeted landscapes.
- 2.3 Enhanced research and implementation capacity for forest restoration.
- 2.4 Strategies and agreement on biodiversity are more gender responsive, at local and national level.

##### **Contributing to Outcome 3 (or Specific Objective 3)**

- 3.1 Enhanced capacity of forest-based value chain actors in sustainable forest value chain development and management, accessing the international markets and sustainable forest exploitation.
- 3.2 Improved access to livelihood opportunities in line with the sustainable forest management principles for communities and forest dwellers.
- 3.3 Improved capacity of Communities for Environment-friendly agriculture in the targeted landscapes.
- 3.4 Enhanced access to sustainable financing for identified sustainable forestry management models and value chains.
- 3.5 Women increasingly participate in and have improved access to jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities in the forest and biodiversity economy.

#### 3.2 Indicative Activities

The activities presented below are indicative and not exhaustive. All outputs and activities are to be further elaborated and fine-tuned as described in the modalities presented under section 4.3. of this Action document.

**Activities relating to Output 1.1:**

- a) Continuing the support to the VPA implementation, through completion of the legality assurance system (LAS).
- b) Monitoring of operations along the timber traceability system (Commercial Department, Legality Verification Department, Liberia Licensing Department, including Independent Auditor) adequately operating and ensuring readiness for FLEGT Licensing for Liberian timber.
- c) Strengthening of policy research and evaluation functions, including staffing, and appropriately resourced to implement their responsibilities in key Government institutions (e.g. EPA, FDA, University of Liberia, College of Agriculture & Forestry). Gender equality research/analysis/perspective will be included consistently.
- d) Enhancing transparency through increased participation of the Civil Society in support of forest governance, within the VPA structures<sup>46</sup> as well fostering local governance processes at community level. Specific attention will be given to organisations representing women's/youth/person with disabilities organisations in order to leave no-one behind.

**Activities relating to Output 1.2:**

- a) Provide support in case of the need to adjust the Legal framework (including Regulations) in line with internationally accepted Sustainable Forest Management norms and in place (Review of managing systems). Specific attention will be given to ensure that any revised legal framework is gender responsive.
- b) Support to legal framework adjustment (including regulations) towards a gradual ban of exports for raw logs.
- c) Update regulatory framework that prohibits chainsaw milling and ownership by non-associated individuals.
- d) Support national dialogue with all stakeholders on how to ensure sustainability of the forest sector and evaluate potential options, including dialogue with women, minority groups, youth, person with disabilities etc.
- e) Support to industry associations (including women's associations).
- f) Prolong concessions' validity and harvesting cycles to 40 years (now mostly 25 years), to adapt the Liberia Code of Forest Harvesting Practices (LCFHP), its implementation and enforcement to allow for sustainable forest management that respects sustainable exploitation practices, harvesting levels and ecosystem boundaries.
- g) Policy design and implementation on recuperation of degraded lands from agriculture (including assessment of Timber Sale Contracts and other government lands) as well as linked to Community Forest Management Agreement (CFMA) land use planning processes in a gender responsive way.

**Activities relating to output 1.3:**

- a) Support to the design, establishment, and operationalisation of an Environmental Court and Office for Environmental and Wildlife Crimes as part of the national judiciary system.
- b) Capacity building for magistrates, judges, prosecutors, police officers to specialise in environmental law, wildlife law, NRM<sup>47</sup> laws (including forestry, minerals, mining and fisheries), environmental economic damages, environmental forensics.
- c) Implementation of awareness and sensitisation programme for civil society as well as lawmakers on environmental law, wildlife law, NRM laws (incl. forestry, minerals, mining, and fisheries) in a gender responsive way.
- d) Continuous support to partners on management of illegal trade of wildlife & timber, including awareness, confiscation, and rehabilitation and recovery of wildlife.

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<sup>46</sup> VPA art. 16.

<sup>47</sup> Natural Resources Management.

- e) Facilitate information exchange between Liberia and neighbouring and international networks (for example through the EU Trade in Wildlife Information Exchange (TWIX) / Africa TWIX, including capacity building.

#### **Activities relating to output 2.1:**

- a) Support effective implementation of Protected Area Management Plans.

#### **Activities relating to output 2.2:**

- a) Specific support to communities in the establishment of Community Conservation Areas, including development of conservation-based management plans (with focus on communities strategically located in corridors between Protected Areas).
- b) Establish conservation-based inclusive activities including tourism and research facilities to support biodiversity conservation and the management of protected areas.

#### **Activities relating to output 2.3:**

- a) Specific support to research and development initiatives, targeting regeneration of degraded areas, Upper Guinean Rainforests and ecological processes, biodiversity and sustainable management of forest resources, including measures for increasing resilience of forests to the impacts of climate change. These activities will integrate a gender responsive approach.

#### **Activities relating to output 3.1:**

- a) Feasibility studies for Sustainable Forest Value Chains (mapping and analysing sawn timber, plywood, bamboo, rattan, honey, medicines, and PES value chains -in gender and youth inclusive manner) incorporating potential for job creation.
- b) Establishment of inclusive Community-based enterprises focusing on sustainable forest value chain development and management (sustainable harvesting, processing, quality management, storage, and marketing) for timber, NTFP<sup>48</sup>s and forest services (PES<sup>49</sup>), including the opportunities to benefit from climate finance schemes such as carbon credits.
- c) Feasibility and support of measures for better access of Liberian timbers to international markets conditional to compliance with VPA/EU deforestation regulation and sustainability principles of forest exploitation.
- d) Support to industry for timber transformation and value addition to forest operators, conditional to compliance with VPA/EU deforestation regulation and sustainability principles of forest exploitation.

#### **Activities relating to output 3.2:**

- a) Financing sustainable livelihoods for communities (in particular women and youth and persons with disabilities) inside protected areas and buffer zones.
- b) Demobilisation (legalisation) programme and formalisation of 'chainsaw millers'.
- c) Facilitating training and employment on climate and forest sustainable activities for all (women and men, youth, persons from ethnic minorities, people with disability etc).
- d) Support CFMAs in the development of (forest) management plans based on conservation, sustainable forest management, sustainable landscape management, sustainable land use (agriculture & charcoal), land rehabilitation and restoration.
- e) Sustainable management and use of specific forests, tree stands and plantations (bamboo) for commercial purposes (furniture, energy).

#### **Activities relating to output 3.3:**

<sup>48</sup> Non Timber Forest Products.

<sup>49</sup> Payment for Forest Services.

- a) Introducing several multipurpose activities linking climate change mitigation and adaptation, integrating forest management, improving livelihood and employment, focusing on rural and urban areas, community forests, buffer zones and ecological corridors (multipurpose nursery, agroforestry, sustainable charcoal production, plantation, animal breeding).

#### **Activities relating to output 3.4:**

- a) Analysis and possible piloting on sustainable financing for conservation management models including carbon and payment for environmental services and taking a gender responsive approach .
- b) Support financing: identifying options and building capacities of producers and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to prepare bankable business plans, including for women and youth.
- c) Support financial institutions to assess forest-based investment opportunities and diversify financial services for sustainable forest investment by enterprises including cooperatives and smallholders.

The commitment of the EU's contribution to the Team Europe Initiative to which this action refers, will be complemented by other contributions in a Team Europe approach. It is subject to the formal confirmation of each respective member's meaningful contribution as early as possible. In the event that the TEIs and/or these contributions do not materialise, the EU action may continue outside a TEI framework.

### **3.3 Mainstreaming**

#### **Environmental Protection & Climate Change**

The Action focuses on sustainable forestry and biodiversity protection and the conservation of large landscapes. Environmental protection and climate change mitigation and adaptation are the core of the action, avoiding land use changes and increasing carbon sequestration by curbing deforestation and promoting restoration of natural forests, thus increasing forest resilience and facilitating biodiversity movements. It thereby plays directly into the Nationally Determined Contributions of the Government of Liberia under the UNFCCC Paris Agreement which envisage a reduction of national deforestation by 50% by 2030 and a reduction of GHG emissions from forest conversion by 40% compared to business as usual by 2030 through green corridor creation and an increase in Forestry Protected Areas.

The Action will support communities (in particular women and youth and persons with disabilities) in their sustainable use of goods and services derived from their surrounding ecosystems, helping to support their livelihoods and safeguards the related natural capital, including productive soil, freshwater, forest products and wildlife, and in doing so, also contribute to building adaptive capacities and reducing vulnerability to climate change.

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening classified the action as Category C (no need for further assessment). The Climate Risk Assessment (CRA) screening concluded that this action is no or low risk (no need for further assessment).

#### **Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls**

As per the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that the following objectives will be pursued (see under objectives section). Improved participation of women and girls in all their diversity in decision making processes on forest management, strategies and agreement on biodiversity are more gender responsive, at local and national level and that women, in all their diversity, increasingly participate in and have improved access to jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities in the forest and biodiversity economy.

Fully integrating women, as actors and beneficiaries, and promoting gender equality will be reflected, where appropriate, in the procedures and practices of the implementing partners.

Gender awareness will be increased by promoting gender balance issues among target groups and beneficiaries responsible for project implementation. Wherever feasible, the action will also support the integration of the experiences and concerns of women into the design and implementation of key initiatives through inclusive consultation and planning processes.

#### **Human Rights**

Sustainable development and the protection of the environment, including ecosystems and biodiversity conservation, contribute to human well-being and to the enjoyment of human rights. The action will apply a rights-based approach taking into consideration the relationship between human rights and environment. Respect for human rights will be placed at the core of all conservation, preservation and restoration actions. This interconnectedness will be reflected in plans, policies, legal framework and governance processes.

Forest dwellers and forest fringed communities have been, since the foundation of Liberia, left behind. The use of the term “country people” speaks by itself. The forest inhabitants are forced by poverty and lack of opportunities to continue with the subsistence itinerant agriculture (slash and burn) and, due to increase of population, overhunting with dramatic effects on the forest integrity.

The intervention will support additional livelihoods for these communities (in particular women and youth and persons with disabilities) based on the persistence of the forest and not in its destruction. Moreover, a particular attention will be given to the benefit sharing for local populations, coming from forest exploitation (currently retained by government) and carbon/green financing.

#### **Disability**

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D0. While disability has not been identified as a significant objective, the action will promote an inclusive approach towards people with disabilities in its communication and participatory activities.

#### **Democracy**

Supporting the Voluntary Partnership Agreement is not only implementing a trade agreement concerning timber: it reaches far beyond. VPAs promote and support legal and governance reforms in their processes and text. The reforms a country implements once it engages in a VPA are those that the partner country and stakeholders identify as necessary to ensure the VPA is credible. In this way, VPAs can improve transparency, accountability, capacity and participation in decision-making as well as supporting the establishment of a framework for sustainable forest sector. This in turn can have positive impacts on jobs and welfare, peace and security, fighting against climate change, and biodiversity conservation.

#### **Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience**

By improving governance (including VPA FLEGT), the sustainable management and access to natural resources, regulating land uses, providing alternative livelihood opportunities that increase human and ecosystem resilience to climate change and other natural disasters and to food security, but also through the management of ecosystems and protected areas, fighting illicit economic activities (illegal logging, wildlife trafficking), the action will contribute to the stability and security of targeted populations in Liberia.

#### **Disaster Risk Reduction**

Keeping the Upper Guinean Forests in a healthy state will contribute to a more stable sub-regional climate patterns. Episodes of drought experienced by some populations are linked to decrease of rainfall. Persistence of forests is the best way to ensure isostasy in climate conditions in the region.

#### **Other considerations if relevant**

N/A

### **3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Likelihood (High/ Medium/ Low)</b>	<b>Impact (High/ Medium/ Low)</b>	<b>Mitigating measures</b>
Legal and Policy and governance	The main risks for the Action are the lack of political will,	<b>High</b>	<b>High</b>	Enhancing the political pressure, (beyond the dialogue).



	transparency and oversight			<p>Joint coordinated pressure from EU+MS, together with international partners, building on the strength of a TEI to add additional leverage and stronger spotlight.</p> <p>Strengthen the legal provisions already in force.</p> <p>Support civil society to play a key role in monitoring of the logging operations in particular in the Community Forests.</p>
People and the Organisation	Scarce interest and lack of capacity of local actors and communities	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Medium</b>	Awareness campaigns and capacity building will be systematically included in the different activities.

### Lessons Learnt:

Despite the multidimensional nature of this project, encompassing biodiversity conservation, forest governance and exploitation, the main source of problems is constantly the same: overspread corruption and weak institutional setting, lack of accountability and political patronage at all levels.

On biodiversity conservation, we witnessed the weakness of the Liberian institutions to monitor and enforce existing legal frameworks and political commitment (mainly the FDA, but also the EPA and other line ministries and agencies involved). Efforts from other donors - Germany - in support of the conservation agenda have been jeopardised by misuse of funds and support has been put on hold. This programme will try to address this through policy dialogue, support to the Legality Verification System, support to the legal and regulatory framework and support to institutional reforms and strengthening of environmental regulations.

More scientific data and a stronger political dialogue with the national authorities will be needed if we want to ensure adequate levels of biodiversity protection and sustainable management and exploitation of forest resources.

Support in conservation must target alternative livelihoods if we are to ensure viability of wildlife populations that are de facto sources of protein (the main sometimes) for forest dwellers. Better economic opportunities linked to forest ecosystems conservation must be the options to consider. Many lessons can be drawn from the EU-funded Sustainable Wildlife Programme (SWM)<sup>50</sup>, particularly from the Central African forest components of this programme which share many of the characteristics of Liberia. Isolated and/or periodic trainings alone do not help shaping an alternative use of resources if that is not provided or incentivised. The models of low impact logging, bringing about accurate forest management with adequate levels of exploitation that are currently under exploration, might shed a light on the future alternatives to 'business as usual' forest exploitation at Community Forestry. These are currently controlled by logging companies showing deficient planning, inefficient exploitation systems, poor respect of rules and neglecting recuperation of forest stocks.

On the side of forest exploitation and VPA implementation, progress has been slow and compliance challenges are still ongoing. However, the AVP has continued to be developed by the government of Liberia. Engagement has been limited despite coordinated EU / UK support to the full spectrum of institutions involved and other actors such as civil society and the private sector.

Integration of the VPA into the broader EU-Liberia dialogue on issues of transparency and accountability is progressing only recently, based on the VPA Independent Auditor's investigation on wrongdoing and faulty operations in timber exports. The regular policy dialogue with the government, notably through EU budget support operations, should be leveraged for the purpose of improving governance, but it needs, more than ever, a joint donor's effort.

The first 5 years of the VPA agreement implementation were dedicated to establishing the institutional structures to implement the agreement, followed by 3 more years where progress was much slower. Following up on the VPA process with the many stakeholders involved, including the civil society organisations (CSOs) and the private sector, requires a large amount of time and resources from the EU Delegation on a permanent basis. Despite these very clear challenges and disadvantages, the potential to bring about changes well beyond the sector justifies a renewed

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.swm-programme.info/>.

investment and increased financial support, not least because VPA structures for sector coordination are considered very comprehensive and a best-practice model to be translated to other sectors.

The national forest inventory performed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) showed a misleading figure of over 6 million hectares of ‘forest coverage’ since the definition of forest was changed back in 2018 and now any surface bigger than 0.5 hectares covered by vegetation higher than 4 metres can be considered within that category. This can hinder efforts to effectively monitor deforestation.

Some recent studies show that the current timber exploitation patterns are not sustainable and that forest stocks will be quite depleted for the next cutting cycle should the current management practices and exploitation modalities persist. It is mandatory to review and reshape the forest management principles and, accordingly, the relevant regulations.

Some data are available on the informal sector that feeds the domestic timber market<sup>51</sup>. Once structures will prove adequate performance in the formal sector, it will be critical to start addressing the informal sector, considering that some support will eventually come into value chain addition and foster transformation and the need to better control fluxes of products and taxes collected still with no adequate transparency from the domestic timber markets.

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<sup>51</sup> [https://buildingmarkets.org/sites/default/files/pdm\\_reports/liberia\\_domestic\\_timber\\_vca.pdf](https://buildingmarkets.org/sites/default/files/pdm_reports/liberia_domestic_timber_vca.pdf).

### 3.5 The Intervention Logic

The underlying intervention logic for this action is that **if** the forest is valued by all its stakeholders as a natural resource and hotspot for biodiversity that can serve Liberia's social and economic development, **then** forest related governance can be improved, conservation strengthened and forest based revenue increased for all. **Thus**, the sustainable use of resources strengthened, supporting improved livelihood and decent job creation for all while fighting climate change and biodiversity losses.

In the action, this will be translated into three components targeting different elements of this overall transformative change.

It is assumed that:

#### **Outcome 1**

**If** VPA implementation progresses sustainably, and

**If** the legal framework and business environment allow for sustainable and inclusive forest based activities, and

**If** institutional reform and law enforcement reduce wild life and timber trafficking,

**Then** forest based activities become more sustainable.

**Thus** combining long term social and economic development and ecological preservation.

#### **Outcome 2**

**If** the national network of protected areas is representative of Liberian biodiversity and the system is managed effectively, and

**If** conservation management models for community lands are promoted and implemented in targeted landscapes, and

**If** forest ecosystems are restored,

**Then** the preservation of Liberian natural resources is strengthened,

**Thus** contributing to natural resource preservation.

#### **Outcome 3**

**If** forest based value chains are developed, and

**If** sustainable forest management models are explored and implemented, and

**If** environment friendly agriculture in targeted landscapes is developed,

**Then** revenue generation from the forestry sector will increase,

**Thus** creating sustainable livelihoods.

The action is implemented in a context where:

The areas and forest patches already degraded need to be either restored towards natural forests or could be converted into sustainable forest plantations for timber or cash crops.

The Action will be implemented at the national level in complementarity and synergy with the regional programmes (NATURAFRICA- West African Forests window) which will focus on 3 transboundary landscapes (Mount Nimba; Gola-Foya-Kpo; Tai-Grebo-Khran-Sapo).

Crosscutting elements of this and all related actions of the EU in Liberia will be:

Fostering education in all related topics, from conservation, climate change, to practical skills into forest value chains development allows for the creation of a professional workforce contributing to sustainable job and livelihood creation. Research and development based on science are absent from the concerned institutions with mandate to manage resources. There is a need to set up research programmes to guide and inform decisions based on long term planning.

Sustained political and policy dialogue between the EU and the Government of Liberia and with all involved stakeholders will contribute to the coordination of international support that feeds into policies that are built on logical arguments, facts and priorities, and serve the interests of the Liberian people.

The action participates to the Team Europe Initiative on Forestry and Biodiversity in Liberia which aims at promoting a sustainable economic development in Liberia, based on sustainable use of natural resources and conservation.

By promoting integrated, inclusive and territorial approaches, searching synergies and complementarities, this cooperation will be pivotal to have advantage for the necessary transformation towards a sustainable forest sector and conservation in Liberia with considerable benefits for its population and global climate.

### 3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

This indicative logframe constitutes the basis for the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the intervention.

On the basis of this logframe matrix, a more detailed logframe (or several) may be developed at contracting stage. In case baselines and targets are not available for the action, they should be informed for each indicator at signature of the contract(s) linked to this AD, or in the first progress report at the latest.

New columns may be added to set intermediary targets (milestones) for the Output and Outcome indicators whenever it is relevant.

- At inception, the first progress report should include the complete logframe (e.g. including baselines/targets).
- Progress reports should provide an updated logframe with current values for each indicator.
- The final report should enclose the logframe with baseline and final values for each indicator.

The indicative logical framework matrix may evolve during the lifetime of the action depending on the different implementation modalities of this action.

The activities, the expected Outputs and related indicators, targets and baselines included in the logframe matrix may be updated during the implementation of the action, no amendment being required to the Financing Decision.

PROJECT MODALITY (3 levels of results / indicators / Source of Data / Assumptions - no activities)

Results	Results chain (a): Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (a): (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
<b>Impact</b>	To strengthen the sustainable use of natural resources in Liberia, while contributing to fight climate change and increasing jobs and growth	<p>1. Areas of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems under a) protection b) sustainable management with EU support (km2) [Indicator 2.9 a and b, GEF]</p> <p>2. Number of smallholders reached with EU-supported interventions aimed to increase their sustainable production, access to markets and/or security of land, disaggregated by sex and age [Indicator 2.1, GEF]</p> <p>3. Number of (a) jobs, (b) green jobs supported/ sustained by the EU (disaggregated for sex and age) [Adjusted Indicator 2.13 a and b, GEF]</p> <p>4. Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions avoided (tonnes CO2eq) with EU support [Indicator 2.7, GEF]</p>	<p>1. To be determined in inception phase (2022)</p> <p>2. Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p> <p>3. 0 (2022)</p> <p>4. Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p>	<p>1. To be determined in inception phase (2025)</p> <p>2. Tbd in the inception phase (2025)</p> <p>3. Tbd in inception phase (2025)</p> <p>4. Tbd in inception phase (2025)</p>	<p>1. To be determined in inception phase</p> <p>2. Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention</p> <p>3. Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention</p> <p>4. Tbd in inception phase</p>	<i>Not applicable</i>
<b>Outcome 1</b>	Improve natural resources governance and business environment for sustainable forest-based activities	<p>1.1 Number of government policies developed or revised with civil society organisation participation through EU support [Indicator 2.29, GEF]</p> <p>1.2 Number of processes related to partner country practices on trade, investment and business, or promoting the external dimension of EU internal policies or EU interest, which have been influenced [Indicator 2.15, GEF]</p>	<p>1.1 Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p> <p>1.2 Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p>	<p>1.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)</p> <p>1.2 Tbd in inception phase (2025)</p>	<p>1.1 Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention</p> <p>1.2 Tbd in inception phase</p>	Political will and support and collaboration from stakeholders

<b>Outcome 2</b>	Strengthen conservation of Liberian biodiversity, focused on biodiversity hotspots and ecological corridors	<p>2.1 Area of forests under effective protection (ha)</p> <p>2.2 Annual rate of deforestation (% /year)</p>	<p>2.1 1,240,480 ha (2022)</p> <p>2.2 Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p>	<p>2.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)</p> <p>2.2 Tbd in inception phase (2025)</p>	<p>2.1 FDA, Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention</p> <p>2.2 JIC aide memoire</p>	Support available from FDA and collaboration from stakeholders
<b>Outcome 3</b>	Increase forest-based revenue and livelihoods	<p>3.1 Value added of forest and environment sectors as % of GDP.</p> <p>3.2 Number of beneficiaries with access to financial services with EU support: a) firms b) people (all financial services), c) people (digital financial services) [Indicator 2.17, GERF]</p> <p>3.3 Forest-related tax revenue collected</p> <p>3.4 Number of (a) jobs, (b) green jobs supported/ sustained by the EU (disaggregated for sex and age) [Adjusted Indicator 2.13, GERF]</p> <p>3.5 Revenues from processed products</p>	<p>3.1 Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p> <p>3.2 0 Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p> <p>3.3 Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p> <p>3.4 Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p> <p>3.5 Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p>	<p>3.1 Tbd in inception phase (by 2025)</p> <p>3.2 Tbd in inception phase (by 2025)</p> <p>3.3 Tbd in inception phase (by 2025)</p> <p>3.4 Tbd in inception phase (by 2025)</p> <p>3.5 Tbd in inception phase (by 2025)</p>	<p>3.1 FDA, Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention</p> <p>3.2 Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention</p> <p>3.3 LRA and FDA reports</p> <p>3.4 Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention</p> <p>3.5 Tbd in the inception phase</p>	<p>Support is available from relevant agencies and private sector</p> <p>There is technical capacity, resources and commitment to develop and implement added value activities</p> <p>Cooperation from residents</p>
<b>Output 1.1</b>	1.1 Improved implementation mechanisms for Voluntary Partnership Agreement related to policy dialogue, regular national stakeholders' dialogue and finalisation of the national Legality Verification System (LVS).	<p>1.1.1 Number of activities to support stakeholder's groups (administration / Private Sector / Civil Society)</p> <p>1.1.2 Number of political and technical meetings related to VPA implementation with support of the EU-funded intervention</p>	<p>1.1.1 Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p> <p>1.1.2 Tbd in inception phase (2022)</p>	<p>1.1.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)</p> <p>1.1.2 Tbd in inception phase (2025)</p>	<p>1.1.1 Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention</p> <p>1.1.2 Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention</p>	Multistakeholder structures for participation in national VPA dialogue are maintained and financed

		1.1.3 Number of women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, activists and environmental rights defenders acting as agents of change on fighting climate change and pursuing environmental justice, at local, national and regional level, disaggregated at least by sex (GAP III Key outcome indicator)	1.1.3 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	1.1.3 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	1.1.3 Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention	
<b>Output 1.2</b>	1.2. Laws and policies related to business environment for sustainable forest-based activities developed/revised and better implemented	1.2.1 Number of laws and policies related to community forests, sustainable forest management and legality verification developed with support of the EU-funded intervention	1.2.1 - 0 (2022)	1.2.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	1.2.1 Text of laws and regulations	Governmental institutions, investment and technical supports toward Community forestry maintained
<b>Output 1.3</b>	1.3. Enhanced capacity of institutions for enforcing environmental regulations and reduction of illegal wildlife and timber trafficking.	1.3.1 Number of Rangers/ Ecoguards/ Community Monitors trained by the EU-funded intervention with increased knowledge and/or skills in Law Enforcement, Biomonitoring and Legal Procedures to protect biodiversity. disaggregated by sex  1.3.2 Number of arrests and prosecution based on illegal logging/timber, wildlife crime, and bushmeat trade offences	1.3.1 - 0 (2022)  1.3.2 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	1.3.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)  1.3.2 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	1.3.1 Pre- and post-training test reports  1.3.2 Ministry/agency administrative data	Political will to implement and enforce related laws and policies
<b>Output 1.4</b>	1.4 Improved participation of women and girls in all their diversity in decision making processes on forest management	1.4.1 Number of women, men, girls and boys activists and environmental rights defenders acting as agents of change on fighting climate change and pursuing environmental justice, at local, national and regional level, disaggregated at least by sex	1.4.1 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	1.4.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	1.4.1 Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention	Political will and support and collaboration from stakeholders



<b>Output 2.1</b>	2.1 Enhanced capacity of national system of Protected Areas to protect Liberian biodiversity and manage Protected Areas and landscapes, including trans-border landscapes	2.1.1 Number of formally gazetted protected areas  2.1.2 Protected areas in (ha) under effective management  2.1.3 Number of protected areas with management plans and co-management plans and implemented	2.1.1 - 3 PA (2022)  2.1.2 Tbd in inception phase (2022)  2.1.3 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	2.1.1 4 PA (2025)  2.1.2 Tbd in inception phase (2025)  2.1.3 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	2.1.1 FDA annual report  2.1.2 FDA annual report  2.1.3 FDA annual report	Support available from FDA and collaboration from stakeholders
<b>Output 2.2</b>	2.2 Conservation Management Models for community lands are promoted and implemented in targeted landscapes	2.2.1 Number of Community Forests formally recognised (i.e. all 9 steps + formal validation completed)  2.2.2 Area of CF under management plans (ha)	2.2.1 Tbd in inception phase (2022)  2.2.2 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	2.2.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)  2.2.2 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	2.2.1 FDA annual report  2.2.2 FDA annual report	Support is available from relevant agencies  Cooperation from residents
<b>Output 2.3</b>	2.3 Enhanced research and implementation capacity for forest restoration	2.3.1 Area of restored forests (ha)	2.3.1 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	2.3.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	2.3.1 Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention	Adequate expertise and training are available for tree management and forest restoration
<b>Output 3.1</b>	3.1 Enhanced capacity of forest-based value chain actors in sustainable forest value chain development and management, accessing the international markets and sustainable forest exploitation.	3.1.1 Increase in value added in EU-supported forest-based value chains	3.1.1 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	3.1.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	3.1.1 Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention	Feasibility study reports on value chains are used to inform decisions on investment in the Liberia Forestry sector  Support available from FDA and collaboration from stakeholders
<b>Output 3.2</b>	3.2 Improved access to livelihood opportunities in line with the sustainable forest management principles for communities and forest dwellers	3.2.1 Number of Sustainable Forest Management Plans developed  3.2.2 Number of chainsaw loggers engaging in legal activities	3.2.1 Tbd in inception phase (2022)  3.2.2 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	3.2.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)  3.2.2 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	3.2.1 FDA and progress reports for the EU-funded intervention  3.2.2 Progress reports for the EU-funded intervention	The regulation on chainsaw milling is gazetted within 2024  Support is available from relevant agencies  Cooperation from residents

		3.2.3 Number of pilot activities for mobilising carbon finance and payment for Environmental Services	3.2.3 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	3.2.3 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	3.2.3 Progress reports for the EU-funded interventions	
<b>Output 3.3</b>	3.3 Improved capacity of Communities for Environment-friendly agriculture in the targeted landscapes.	3.3.1 Number of Initiatives of climate smart agriculture  3.3.2 Increased area for agroforestry	3.3.1 Tbd (2022) in inception phase  3.3.2 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	3.3.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)  3.3.2 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	3.3.1 Progress reports for the EU-funded interventions  3.3.2 Progress reports for the EU-funded interventions	Support is available from relevant agencies  Cooperation from residents
<b>Output 3.4</b>	3.4 Enhanced access to sustainable financing for identified sustainable forestry management models and value chains	3.4.1 Number of beneficiaries with access to financial services with EU support: a) firms b) Individuals  3.4.2 Value of sustainable investments	3.4.1 Tbd in inception phase (2022)  3.4.2 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	3.4.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)  3.4.2 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	3.4.1 Progress reports for the EU-funded interventions  3.4.2 Progress reports for the EU-funded interventions	Support is available from relevant agencies
<b>Output 3.5</b>	3.5. Women increasingly participate in and have improved access to jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities in the forest and biodiversity economy	3.5.1 Number of women having an income through their job or their own business	3.5.1 Tbd in inception phase (2022)	3.5.1 Tbd in inception phase (2025)	3.5.1 Progress reports for the EU-funded interventions	Support is available from relevant agencies

## 4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

### 4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this Action, it is envisaged to conclude a Financing Agreement with the Republic of Liberia

### 4.2 Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is **72** months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

### 4.3 Implementation of the Budget Support Component

N/A

### 4.4 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures<sup>52</sup>.

#### 4.4.1 Direct Management (Grants)

##### 4.4.1.1 *STICHTING FERN*

#### **Grants: (direct management)**

##### **(a) Purpose of the grant**

The grant is meant to contribute to:

- Outcome 1. Improve natural resources governance and business environment for sustainable forest-based activities  
Output 1.1. Improved implementation mechanisms for Voluntary Partnership Agreement related to policy dialogue, regular national stakeholders' dialogue and finalisation of the national Legality Verification System (LVS).

##### **(b) Justification of a direct grant**

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to Stichting Fern.

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified on the basis of Article 195 (c and f) of the financial regulation because of the elements provided below:

Within a framework of continuity, consolidation and sustainability with the previous successful EU/FERN action, FERN is proposed for a direct award Grant as it is the only organisation suitable for the implementation of this action in Liberia.

FERN is the only international non-governmental organisation (NGO) active in the forestry sector in Liberia since 2006 with all key players in the forestry sector and in the VPA FLEGT implementation.

<sup>52</sup> The restrictive measures were adopted pursuant to Article 215 TFEU. [www.sanctionsmap.eu](http://www.sanctionsmap.eu). Note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy, the OJ prevails.

They have the specific competences and the high degree of specialisation (VPA FLEGT, Independent monitoring, investigative journalism, community and forestry governance, radio broadcast) necessary for this specific kind of action, in particular in networking, federating and supporting civil society on forest governance, within the VPA FLEGT structures as well promoting local governance processes at community level.

Its role is unique and essential as there is a strong evidence that there are very few local NGOs with the technical and financial capacity to implement EU grants in Liberia without the support of an international counterpart.

#### 4.4.1.2 *WCF (Wild Chimpanzee Foundation)*

##### **Grants: (direct management)**

##### **(a) Purpose of the grant**

The grant is meant to contribute to:

- Outcome 1. Improve natural resources governance and business environment for sustainable forest-based activities
- Output 1.3. Enhanced capacity of institutions for enforcing environmental regulations and reduction of illegal wildlife and timber trafficking.

##### **(b) Justification of a direct grant**

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to WCF (Wild Chimpanzee Foundation).

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified on the basis of Article 195(c and f) of the financial regulation, because of the elements provided below:

Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF) is proposed for direct award as the only operator with specific capacities, technical competences and specialisation for this specific kind of sensitive activities, requiring significant knowhow, bargain power and important networking capacities.

WCF is the lead partner for the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) for Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) issues and for the Wildlife Crime Task Force since its formation under the previous EU project since 2019. WCF is also leading the network Law Enforcement Sub-Committee (LESC), which encompasses the whole array of institutions within the Government of Liberia as well as national and international organisations that work specifically on IWT.

It is also strategic and essential to work in continuity and consolidation with the previous actions with the same trusted partner who is highly appreciated by the FDA and by the other actors involved in the sector.

It is the same operator as proposed for a for a grant under outcome 2 but for a completely different type of action (IWT).

#### 4.4.1.3 *WCF (Wild Chimpanzee Foundation) for activities in Grebo-Khran-Sapo landscape for activities in Sapo National Parc.*

##### **Grants: (direct management)**

##### **(a) Purpose of the grant**

The grant is meant to contribute to:

- Outcome 2. Strengthen conservation of Liberian biodiversity, focused on biodiversity hotspots and ecological corridors
- Output 2.1 Enhanced capacity of national system of Protected Areas to protect Liberian biodiversity and manage Protected Areas and landscapes, including trans-border landscapes

Output 2.2 Conservation Management Models for community lands are promoted and implemented in targeted landscapes.

- Outcome 3. Increase forest-based revenue and livelihoods

Output 3.2. Improved access to livelihood opportunities in line with the sustainable forest management principles for communities and forest dwellers

**(b) Justification of a direct grant**

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to WCF (Wild Chimpanzee Foundation).

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified on the basis of Article 195(c and f) of the Financial Regulation, because of the elements provided below:

Wild Chimpanzee Foundation (WCF) is proposed for direct award as the only effective operator in that area (Grebo-Khran-Sapo landscape) with active programmes and technical competences for this specific kind of actions.

They have the capacity to manage complexe actions across the whole GKS landscape with emphasis on activities with communities and Protected Areas managers in Liberia.

**4.4.1.4 RSPB (Royal Society for Protection of Birds), in consortium with SCNL (Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia) in Gola-Foya-Lofa landscape.**

**Grants: (direct management)**

**(a) Purpose of the grant**

The grant is meant to contribute to:

- Outcome 2. Strengthen conservation of Liberian biodiversity, focused on biodiversity hotspots and ecological corridors

Output 2.1 Enhanced capacity of national system of Protected Areas to protect Liberian biodiversity and manage Protected Areas and landscapes, including trans-border landscapes

Output 2.2 Conservation Management Models for community lands are promoted and implemented in targeted landscapes.

- Outcome 3. Increase forest-based revenue and livelihoods

Output 3.2. Improved access to livelihood opportunities in line with the sustainable forest management principles for communities and forest dwellers

**(b) Justification of a direct grant**

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to RSPB (Royal Society for Protection of Birds).

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified on the basis of Article 195(c and f) of the Financial Regulation because of the elements provided below:

RSPB (Royal Society for Protection of Birds) is proposed for a direct award as the only operator in the zone, with long and active presence in this landscape of more than 25 years (Gola-Foya-Lofa landscape). RSPB has specific technical competences and specialisation (IMET and SMART tools, land use planning and management) in addition to strong management experience on integrated approach in this landscape that no other operator has. They are also a highly trusted partner.

#### 4.4.2 Direct Management (Procurement)

N/A

#### 4.4.3 Indirect Management with a pillar assessed entity

##### 4.4.3.1 European Forest Institute (EFI)

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with the European Forest Institute (EFI).

This implementation entails activities related to Outputs 1.1, 1.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2 and 3.4 which include supporting the VPA implementation, the revision of forest management practices and support to value chains development.

The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria:

- The Entity has specific technical competence in the support of VPA-FLEGT processes and managing related projects in relevant fields such as forest sector governance reforms, timber legality assurance and monitoring systems, multi-stakeholder dialogue in the forest sector, forest sector MSME support, as required for the implementation of the action.
- The Entity has the management capacity to coordinate a complex action that requires the involvement of a significant number of actors, both as stakeholders and as associated partners in the implementation.
- The Entity has the necessary legitimacy vis-à-vis stakeholders in Liberia, in particular public authorities, to operate in the fields covered by this action.
- An additional criteria is timing. All the EU projects related to the VPA support implementation ended in June 2022 and it is essential to fill the time gap as soon as possible in order to give continuity to the process.

In case the envisaged entity would need to be replaced, the Commission's services may select another replacement entity using the same criteria. If the entity is replaced, the decision to replace it needs to be justified.

##### 4.4.3.2 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with a UN Organisation: UNDP. This implementation entails activities related to outputs 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 and which include the demobilisation programme for informal chainsaw miller, the development of livelihood alternatives at communities level, as well as agroforestry, tree plantations, sustainable charcoal production, multipurpose tree nurseries, training and analysis of opportunities on carbon finance. UNDP was also selected by Sweden to implement complementary activities to EU financed forest governance support in the TEI framework. This will facilitate synergies and coordination. UNDP is the only Agency designated as an 'Integrator' within the UN system. These mandates are reflected in UNDP's unique ability to bring together government with citizens, the private sector, civil society, other UN agencies, and other partners to develop new policies and programmes and to facilitate partnerships and synergies. No other agency in the UN system or NGO in Liberia has the same level of convening authority as UNDP within the Environment and Climate Change sector, nor the level of influence with key decision-makers, including high level access to the President, Minister of State, Minister of Finance and Development Planning, Minister of Agriculture, Managing Director of FDA and Executive Director of EPA, as well as other key sectoral stakeholders. No other development agency in Liberia has the same level of in-country expertise, or readily available regional capacity on environment, climate change, REDD+, livelihoods and forestry. UNDP, along with its local partners in Liberia, has significant and specific experience and expertise in implementing sustainable forest management and actions against climate change, including multi-purpose tree nurseries production and developing community centred agroforestry in the northwest and south-eastern forest landscapes in Liberia.

The envisaged entity has been selected using the following criteria:

- The entity is able to work in the difficult Liberian context, with the capacity and the logistics needed to implement activities at the national level. The entity will also use local partners (CSOs) to carry on

activities on the ground. The entity will be able to empower, facilitate and coordinate CSOs active in the area of community forests and governance.

- The Entity has the necessary convening authority.
- The Entity has an extensive experience in Liberia.
- The entity will be able to ensure the structuring of activities in an ‘additionality’ framework for carbon finance at Community level.
- The Entity has a Strong Fiduciary & Programme Management Standards.

In case the envisaged entity need to be replaced, the Commission’s services may select another replacement entity using the same criteria. If the entity is replaced, the decision to replace it needs to be justified.

#### 4.4.4 Changes from indirect to direct management mode (and vice versa) due to exceptional circumstances (one alternative second option)

##### **From indirect to direct management:**

If negotiations with EFI entity fail, that part of this Action may be implemented in direct management (Procurement).

If negotiations with UNDP entity fail, that part of this action may be implemented in direct management (Grants), through a call for proposals.

##### **(a) Purpose of the grant**

The grant is meant to contribute to:

- Outcome 3. Increase forest-based revenue and livelihoods.  
Output 3.1. Enhanced capacity of forest-based value chain actors in sustainable forest value chain development and management, accessing the international markets and sustainable forest exploitation.  
Output 3.2. Improved access to livelihood opportunities in line with the sustainable forest management principles for communities and forest dwellers.  
Output 3.3. Improved capacity of Communities for Environment-friendly agriculture in the targeted landscapes.

##### **(b) Type of applicants targeted**

The applicants targeted may be Member States’ Agencies, International organisations and NGOs, (all of them possibly in partnership with local actors). All applicants must have the necessary expertise to respond to the criterias and the capacity to deliver on the results of this action.

The envisaged entity will be selected using the following criteria:

- The entity is able to work in the difficult Liberian context, with the capacity and the logistics needed to implement activities at the national level. The entity will also use local partners (CSOs) to carry on activities on the ground. The entity will be able to empower, facilitate and coordinate CSOs active in the area of community forests and governance.
- The Entity has the necessary convening authority.
- The Entity has an extensive experience in Liberia.
- The entity will be able to ensure the structuring of activities in an ‘additionality’ framework for carbon finance at Community level.
- The Entity has a Strong Fiduciary & Programme Management Standards.



- The Entity has experience and proven competence in the following fields: demobilisation programs, development of livelihood alternatives at communities level, agroforestry, tree plantation, sustainable charcoal production, multipurpose tree nurseries and training and analysis of opportunities on carbon finance.

#### 4.5 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply in the relevant contractual document, subject to the following provisions.

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

#### 4.6 Indicative Budget

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Third-party contribution, in currency identified (in EUR)
Implementation modalities – cf. section 4.3		
<b>Outcome 1. Improved natural resources governance and business environment for sustainable forest-based activities</b> composed of		
<b>Output 1.1</b>		
Grant (direct management) – cf. section 4.4.1 <b>Stichting Fern</b>	500 000	
<b>Output 1.3</b>		
Grant (direct management) – cf. section 4.4.1 <b>WCF</b>	1 500 000	
<b>Outcome 2. Strengthened conservation of Liberian biodiversity, focused on biodiversity hotspots and ecological corridors</b> composed of		
<b>Outcome 3. Increased forest-based revenue and livelihoods</b> composed of		
<b>Output 2.1, Output 2.2 and Output 3.2</b>		
Grant (direct management) – cf. section 4.4.1 <b>WCF</b>	2 900 000	
Grant (direct management) – cf. section 4.4.1 <b>RSPB</b>	1 900 000	
<b>Subtotal Grants (direct management)</b>	<b>6 800 000</b>	
<b>Outcomes 1, 2 and 3</b>		
Indirect management with <b>EFI</b> - cf. section 4.4.3	3 500 000	
<b>Outcome 3</b>		
Indirect management with <b>UNDP</b> - cf. section 4.4.3	4 500 000	

<b>Subtotal indirect management</b>	<b>8 000 000</b>	
<b>Evaluation</b> – cf. section 5.2 <b>Audit</b> – cf. section 5.3	200 000	
<b>Contingencies</b>		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>15 000 000</b>	

#### 4.7 Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

The EU and the implementing partners will agree upon the appropriate formats for the steering committees of the programme under the respective components. If necessary some technical committees will be also established in order to ensure synergies and complementarities among the different actions.

The implementing partners will be responsible of the day-to-day management of the agreements and the implementation of activities.

The EU delegation will ensure that any form of steering committee encompasses all the key stakeholders, including rights holders such as youth, women organisations and organisations representing vulnerable and marginalised groups.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action.

## 5 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

### 5.1 Monitoring and Reporting

At the start of the action, a baseline survey for the logical frameworks of each contract will be defined by implementing partners, in collaboration with the Government of Liberia.

Specific modalities for each actions' components, basically the three outputs (indicators, targets and assumptions) will be defined in the respective contracts/agreements during the inception phases, in a way that will provide inputs for the performance monitoring of the action globally, and ideally to the TEI.

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partners' responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partners shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

### 5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, a final evaluation may be carried out for this action or its components via an implementing partner according to the action development and guidance by steering and technical committees. It could also take the form of a larger joint evaluation with Member States in the framework of the TEI on 'forestry and biodiversity'.

Any evaluations shall assess to what extent the action is taking into account the human rights-based approach as well as how it contributes to gender equality and women's empowerment and disability. Inclusion of expertise on human rights, disability and gender equality should be ensured in the evaluation teams.

In case a final or ex-post evaluation is envisaged, it will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), taking into account the fact that the action supports innovation initiatives and pilot testing, especially in community forests.

In case an evaluation is not planned, the Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner.

Where an evaluation is foreseen and is to be contracted by the Commission, the Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 3 months in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports may be shared with the partners and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination. The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, apply the necessary adjustments.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a framework contract.

### 5.3 Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

## 6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The 2021-2027 programming cycle will adopt a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

It will remain a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. This obligation will continue to apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, partner countries, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU member states.

However, action documents for specific sector programmes are in principle no longer required to include a provision for communication and visibility actions promoting the programmes concerned. These resources will instead be consolidated in Cooperation Facilities established by support measure action documents, allowing Delegations to plan and execute multiannual strategic communication and public diplomacy actions with sufficient critical mass to be effective on a national scale.

## Appendix 1 REPORTING IN OPSYS

An intervention (also generally called project/programme) is the operational entity associated to a coherent set of activities and results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Interventions are the most effective (hence optimal) entities for the operational follow-up by the Commission of its external development operations. As such, Interventions constitute the base unit for managing operational implementations, assessing performance, monitoring, evaluation, internal and external communication, reporting and aggregation.

Primary Interventions are those contracts or groups of contracts bearing reportable results and respecting the following business rule: ‘a given contract can only contribute to one primary intervention and not more than one’. An individual contract that does not produce direct reportable results and cannot be logically grouped with other result reportable contracts is considered a ‘support entities’. The addition of all primary interventions and support entities is equivalent to the full development portfolio of the Institution.

The present Action identifies as:

<b>Contract level</b>		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 1	Grant on Gola landscape
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 2	Grant on GKS landscape
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 3	Grant on Wild Life and Timber Trafficking
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 4	Grant on support to CSOs to VPA process
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 5	Contribution Agreement with UNDP
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 6	Contribution Agreement with EFI