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RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

Junior Minister for International Cooperation and French language affairs

Press Release from Alain Joyandet

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COPENHAGEN: FRANCE PROVIDES TECHNOLOGY TO PROTECT THE FORESTS OF THE CONGO BASIN

France is set to provide the nations of the Congo basin, which together share the world's second largest expanse of forest, with imagery from the SPOT 5 and the future SPOT 6 and SPOT 7 satellites over the next five years.

The high-resolution satellite data will help these nations to preserve their forest heritage. Imagery will be supplied by EADS-Astrium and its subsidiaries Spot Image and Infoterra, European leaders in space-based Earth-imaging technologies and world-leading suppliers of satellite imagery.

France will fund the provision of satellite data until 2015 through its AFD development agency. Imagery will be received at the ground station that Gabon has decided to build in Libreville.

The imagery will be available to public stakeholders—government agencies, research centres, universities, etc.—and NGOs working to protect the Congo basin's 230 million hectares of equatorial forest, a vast expanse that has been dubbed the planet's "second lung".

This decision confirms France's commitment to bring cutting-edge technologies to the world's southern nations, a key element of negotiating efforts to achieve a global climate agreement.

As French President Nicolas Sarkozy reasserted on 16 December at the meeting of COMIFAC* in Paris, forests have a vital role to play in stabilizing global climate. It is therefore imperative to curb emissions due to deforestation, which account for nearly 20% of total greenhouse gas emissions.

* Commission des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale – Central African Forests Commission