



« Libérer le Potentiel
des Services des Ressources en Eau
en vue du Développement Durable
dans le Bassin du Congo »

<https://cbforum.crrebac.org>

**Forum du Bassin
du Congo 2025**

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Operational Guide for the Technical Secretariat of the Second Edition of the Congo Basin Forum 2025

May 2025

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1. Background

This document serves as a methodological guideline for the Chair and members of the Technical Secretariat of the thematic sessions of the Congo Basin Forum 2025. Its purpose is to provide detailed and consistent operational guidelines covering the key responsibilities of the Technical Secretariat: (i) coordination and facilitation of thematic sessions, (ii) time management, (iii) structuring of discussions, (iv) collection and validation of recommendations, and (v) preparation of draft Thematic Policy Briefs and the Book of Abstracts for the conference.

This guideline aims to support the coordinated engagement of the Technical Secretariat and the Forum's steering bodies, ensuring management based on scientific excellence, strategic relevance, and strong accountability to regional and global objectives related to water resource services, hydropolitical cooperation, and sustainable development.

2. Objectives of the Guideline

- To strengthen the effectiveness of the Forum' scientific management.
- To ensure methodological consistency in the coordination of the sessions.
- To guarantee the consolidation of relevant, actionable recommendations aligned with regional and international priorities.
- To optimize the impact of deliverables for policymakers, donors, scientists, and institutions.

3. Forum Thematic areas

The Congo Basin Forum 2025 is built around the central theme: “***Unlocking the Potential of Water Resource Services to Achieve Sustainable Development in the Congo Basin.***” It is structured around seven interconnected thematic areas, each highlighting a strategic set of issues related to water resource services in the region. These thematic areas aim to structure the discussions, guide knowledge production, and support the formulation of relevant, actionable recommendations aligned with regional and international priorities.

3.1. Thematic area 1. Water - Climate - Forest - Biodiversity - Carbon

Thematic area 1 explores the complex and interdependent interactions among water resources, tropical forests, peatlands, biodiversity, and the carbon cycle within the context of climate change. Its objective is to promote sustainable management practices that reconcile the preservation of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems with the enhancement of ecosystem services, particularly carbon sequestration and climate resilience.

Protecting these vital ecosystems requires a holistic, watershed-based approach from upstream to coastal deltas, ensuring a balance between water quality and quantity, in line with the principles of Agenda 21 of the United Nations. Sustainable water management must prevent ecological degradation and resource-use conflicts, while also addressing pollution that threatens human health, food security, and the stability of natural environments.

In this context, the thematic area highlights the need for participatory environmental management, ensuring minimum ecological flow to preserve essential ecosystem functions, combating surface and groundwater pollution, and promoting clean technologies, local know-how, and policies based on the polluter-pays principle. Strengthening knowledge about biodiversity and its role in ecosystem functioning is also central to ensuring the long-term sustainability of water resources.

3.2. Thematic area 2. Water - Energy transition

Thematic area 2 emphasizes the strategic interdependence between water resources and the production of renewable energy, particularly in the context of ecological transition. It aims to provide transdisciplinary training to understand the links between water, energy, and social security from a sustainable development perspective.

This thematic area addresses key issues related to the design, sizing, and management of complex water and energy systems. It highlights appropriate conversion technologies based on available resources, performance indicators for various renewable energy sources, and a clear understanding of policies supporting regional energy development.

The objective is to strengthen the capacity to actively contribute to solving environmental challenges related to energy, while integrating local specificities and the need for efficient use of water resources. This thematic area also identifies opportunities for the development of renewable energy in the basin, including hydropower, solar energy, and diversified energy mixes.

3.3. Thematic area 3 Water - Navigation - Blue Economy

Thematic area 3 explores the synergies between inland waterways, river transport, port governance, and sustainable economic development based on aquatic resources. It seeks to identify opportunities for improving navigation infrastructure in the Congo Basin, promote responsible and inclusive economic models in riverine and coastal areas, and assess the environmental and social impacts of river-based activities.

This thematic area addresses issues related to the analysis, design, and maintenance of navigable waterways, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of public policies related to navigation. Special attention is given to the mastery of equipment and technical systems particularly fixed and mobile navigation aids and specialized structures which

are essential components of this thematic area. These concerns are aligned with the goals of safety, logistical efficiency, and ecological sustainability within the blue economy.

3.4. Thematic area 4. Water - Agriculture - Food security

Thematic area 4 highlights the role of water management in enhancing agricultural performance and the resilience of regional food systems. It aims to promote water-efficient farming practices, optimize irrigation systems at various scales, and improve understanding of the interactions between agriculture, productivity, and pressure on water resources.

This thematic area aligns with key areas such as quantifying crop water requirements, planning and designing appropriate irrigation systems (including drip irrigation), managing canal flows, assessing the relevance of drainage using technical, economic, and environmental criteria, and designing effective drainage networks.

It also seeks to identify irrigation methods adapted to local contexts, plan the necessary human and financial resources, manage water surpluses or shortages during critical periods, and implement essential precautions to protect soil health and ecological balance.

3.5. Thematic area 5. Drinking water - Hygiene - Sanitation

Thematic area 5 addresses major challenges related to equitable access to safe drinking water and dignified sanitation services, particularly in vulnerable areas. It aims to improve knowledge on water supply infrastructure, promote appropriate hygiene practices in both urban and rural settings, and reduce the prevalence of waterborne diseases through integrated, technical, and community-based approaches.

This thematic area focuses on sustainable technologies for scalable drinking water systems and their resilience to environmental impacts. It also provides an in-depth understanding of the management of urban wastewater collection and treatment systems, along with methodological tools for identifying needs, planning interventions, and developing sanitation master plans tailored to local contexts.

3.6. Thematic area 6. Water - Society - Health - Private Sector - Governance

Thematic area 6 explores the institutional, socio-political, economic, health, and legal dimensions of water resource management. It highlights the importance of multi-level, inclusive, and coherent water governance capable of addressing growing challenges related to resource scarcity, unequal access, usage conflicts, health crises (notably through a “One Health” approach), and environmental and economic pressures.

The objective is to strengthen regulatory frameworks, encourage active private sector participation in the provision and management of water services, and promote effective engagement of local communities and civil society organizations. This integrated approach lays the foundation for sustainable, equitable, and resilient water management that supports development goals, social justice, and public health.

3.7. Thematic area 7. Experiences from Major Tropical River Basins

The cross-cutting Thematic area 7 enables the sharing of experiences from other tropical basins (Amazon, Nile, Mekong, etc.), highlighting best practices in water resource management, common challenges observed in tropical contexts, and promoting inter-basin cooperation at regional and international levels.

4. Composition of the Technical Secretariat for the Thematic Sessions

The Thematic Technical Secretariat is an operational unit composed of up to five members, specifically mobilized to provide scientific, technical, and logistical support for each thematic session of the Forum. It brings together key stakeholders and resource persons from the relevant thematic area to ensure an interdisciplinary and integrated perspective on water-related issues. The Technical Secretariat includes:

- Researchers and academics;
- Field professionals or institutional representatives;
- Technical and financial partners active in the field;
- Civil society organizations engaged in water governance.

The purpose of this composition is to guarantee a holistic and inclusive understanding of the issues addressed, consistent with the systemic complexity of water resource services in the Congo Basin. The Thematic Technical Secretariat operates on a daily basis and consists of:

- A Chairperson, responsible for daily coordination of the activities;
- Technical Secretariat members, who contribute their sectoral expertise.

Each Technical Secretariat is specifically assigned to a particular thematic session and intervenes in a targeted manner according to the Forum' schedule. In case the Chairperson is unavailable, a member of the Secretariat is appointed by consensus to temporarily coordinate and represent the Secretariat in its functions.

4.1. Responsibilities of the Chair of the Technical Secretariat

The Chair of the Technical Secretariat holds a strategic position in the scientific and political management of the thematic sessions. The Chair acts as the guarantor of coherence in orientations, the connection between scientific outcomes and strategic

clarity of recommendations, as well as their alignment with regional and international institutional priorities.

The responsibilities of the Chair of the Technical Secretariat include:

- Presiding over plenary sessions and validation meetings by guiding scientific discussions.
- Supporting stakeholder mobilization.
- Ensuring that recommendations align with regional frameworks and international agendas (SDGs, etc.).
- Maintaining the political coherence of messages emerging from the thematic sessions.
- Validating priority recommendations to be submitted to the Forum coordination for the development of Policy Briefs.
- Actively participating in the production of final deliverables (Policy Briefs and Conference Book of Abstracts).

4.2. Responsibilities of the Members of the Technical Secretariat

Members of the Technical Secretariat play a key role in the scientific, logistical, and operational coordination of the thematic sessions. They support the Chair in implementing decisions and providing technical oversight of the work. Their responsibilities include:

- Coordinating the logistical and technical aspects of the sessions.
- Collecting, structuring, and validating recommendations.
- Drafting the strategic notes (Policy Briefs) and the Conference Book of Abstracts.
- Providing support to moderators and rapporteurs during plenary sessions, as needed.

5. Facilitation of the Thematic Sessions

5.1. Tools to be Used During the Thematic Sessions

The following tools will be used during the facilitation of the thematic sessions:

- Standardized session sheets compiling information such as the rapporteur, the relevant thematic area, the title of the presentation, the speaker's country of origin, key ideas, and recommendations.
- Recommendation collection grids that gather the strategic and scientific recommendations from the thematic session.
- A shared document management system (Drive, database).

5.2. Facilitation Phases of the Thematic Sessions

The facilitation of the thematic sessions can be summarized in three steps as described below:

Step 1: Before the session

- Prepare a briefing for moderators (objectives, timing, speakers).
- Provide a session sheet including: objectives, key questions, list of speakers, format (panel, roundtable, debate, etc.).

Step 2: During the session

- Each session consists of **2 hours**, allocated as follow:
 - Introduction: **5 minutes**
 - Eight presentations: **10 minutes** by speaker or **1h 20'** for all the presentations.
 - Discussion: **20 minutes**
 - Summary: **10 minutes**
- Strict respect the time allocation.
- Encourage participation from the audience and stakeholders.
- Ensure structured note-taking by a designated daily rapporteur.

Step 3: After the session

- Validate key messages with speakers if necessary.
- Submit recommendations to the Forum's coordination at the end of the session.

Annexes

Annex 1. Standardized Thematic Session Sheet



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CONGO BASIN FORUM 2025: June 10–13, 2025

Standardized Thematic Session Sheet

Date	
Relevant Thematic Area	
Author or Speaker	
Title of Presentation	
Speaker's Country of Origin	
Key Ideas or Highlights	

Practical Recommendations	
Strategic Recommendations	

Annex 2. Recommendation Collection Grid



CONGO BASIN FORUM 2025: June 10–13, 2025

Recommendation Collection Grid

- Column Legend:
- No.: *Unique identifier*
- Thematic Area: *Relevant field*
- Recommendation: *Concrete proposed action.*
- Stakeholders Involved: *Relevant parties involved.*
- Level of Action: *Local / National / Regional / International.*
- Priority: *Low (1) / Medium (2) / High (3).*
- Deadline: *Short-term (1) / Medium-term (2) / Long-term (3).*
- Monitoring Indicators (optional): *Possible evaluation measures.*

No.	Thematic Area	Recommendation	Stakeholders Involved	Level of Action	Priority	Monitoring Indicators (optional)
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

Annex 3. Template for abstracts



CONGO BASIN FORUM 2025: 10-13 June 2025

Template for abstracts

Field	Content to be filled in
Title of communication	<i>(Clear, concise, informative title)</i>
Author(s)	<i>Last name First name, Affiliation (Institution, Country). List all authors.</i>
Corresponding author	<i>Name, Email</i>
Keywords	<i>3-5 keywords separated by commas</i>
Abstract	<i>Text of 150 to 300 words including</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Background and issues</i> - <i>Aims and objectives</i> - <i>Methodology</i> - <i>Key finding</i> - <i>Recommendations</i>
Theme concerned	<i>(Tick or indicate one of the forum's themes)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Water - Climate - Forest - Biodiversity - Carbon <input type="checkbox"/> Water -Energy transition <input type="checkbox"/> Water - Navigation - Blue Economy <input type="checkbox"/> Water - Agriculture - Food security <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking water - Hygiene - Sanitation <input type="checkbox"/> Water - Society - Health - Private Sector - Governance <input type="checkbox"/> Other : _____
Type of contribution	<input type="checkbox"/> Oral presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Poster

