2024 Activity Report

Rapport d’activités 2024

ANNUAL REPORT 2024 Brainforest is a Gabonese NGO. Founded in 1998, its initial objective was the protection of the Koungou Falls (Ivindo River) in the northwest of Gabon, which were threatened at the time by the construction of a hydroelectric dam intended to supply the Belinga iron mine.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations FC: Community Forest CLPA: Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples CCC: Contractual Specifications PSG: Simple Management Plan DFCOM: Directorate of Community Forests EU: European Union AFD: French Development Agency MINEF: Ministry of Water and Forests RRI: Rights and Resources Initiative WRI: World Resources Institute WWF: World Wildlife Fund CCGC: Local Management Advisory Committee NGO: Non-Governmental Organization CSO: Civil Society Organization CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility IGR: Income Generating Activities UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ID: Development Initiative REDHAC: Network of Human Rights Defenders in Central Africa DGF: General Directorate of Forests

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Message from the Executive Secretary '' In 2024, Brainforest has persisted with determination in its efforts for the protection and valorization of Gabonese forests. We focused our action on four major axes : the strengthening of forest governance, the independent observation of forests, the promotion of community forests and the support of

local communities in training, sensitization and information. These initiatives have contributed o strengthen the transparency and inclusive participation of all stakeholders in the sustainable management of our natural resources. In the domain of forest governance and of independent observation, we have multiplied our actions on the ground to report on the forest exploitation so that it be sustainable. At the same time, we have intensified training and awareness of the local actors to strengthen their capacities. Regarding the community forests, we have pursued the support of the communities in establishing strong legal frameworks and the sustainable management of their resources. This work, supported by the Norwegian Initiative on climate and forests (NICFI) and technical partners such as ClientEarth, has resulted in the development of practical tools and of training facilitating an effective and participatory governance. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my warmest thanks to all those who supported us in 2024, especially the funders for their steadfast support, our technical partners for their expertise, all the staff of Brainforest for their dedication, and the local communities for their trust and their active collaboration. Their commitment gives the full meaning of our action. At the dawn of 2025, we reaffirm our commitment to remain close to the local populations. Our values of proximity will guide our actions : in listening to the needs of the communities, we will work hand in hand to strengthen this anchoring and work together for a sustainable future for Gabon's forests. '' Acting Executive Secretary & Program Coordinator Martial DJINANG Annual Report 2024

About Brainforest Brainforest is a Gabonese NGO. Founded in 1998, its initial objective was the protection of the Koungou Falls (Ivindo River) in the northwest of Gabon, which were threatened at the time by the construction of a hydroelectric dam intended to supply the Belinga iron mine. Since then, Brainforest's action has expanded globally to the governance of natural resources. Issues related to forest protection, land tenure, transparency, the rights of local communities, indigenous peoples, and environmental defenders, as well as the equitable redistribution of revenues from the exploitation of natural resources, remain at the center of our action and commitment. Brainforest's vision is to achieve a Gabonese society in which the environment will be protected, with the active participation of the populations, who will benefit from the economic returns of the sustainable management of natural resources. The mission of Brainforest is to inform, train, and support all stakeholders (administration, private sector, communities, and NGOs) for a sustainable and equitable management of natural resources in Gabon and now in the Congo Basin. Our intervention revolves around four main axes, namely: Promotion of community rights over land and resources Support for economic alternatives in rural areas Support for participatory governance, the application of the law, and transparency in the Forest-Environment sector Promotion of the rights of environmental defenders and indigenous populations Brainforest deploys its action in the provinces of Haut-Ogooué, Ogooué-Ivindo, Nyanga, Ngounié, Woleu-Ntem, and Estuaire, but also in some countries of the Congo Basin. Annual Report 2024 Óphoto: Brainforest offices

Context and Framework for Intervention The year 2024 was marked in Gabon by major events, both politically, economically, culturally, and in terms of environmental preservation and the sustainable management of natural resources in the Congo Basin. Reforms Discoveries Nationalization Transition Politically, the country was going through an unprecedented period of political and military transition. Thus, we can note the constitutional referendum of November 16, 2024, where Gabonese approved 91% a new Constitution aimed at limiting presidential terms, abolishing the position of Prime Minister in favor of a vice-president appointed by the government, and strengthening democratic institutions. Then the inclusive national dialogue of

April 2024. Economically, we can note the nationalization of Assala Energy on July 1, 2024. By this act, Gabon regained control of this oil company, demonstrating its will for sovereignty over its natural resources. Speaking of the environment and the protection of forests in the Congo Basin, we note with satisfaction that 742 new species have been identified in a WWF report that revealed the discovery of these 742 new species of fauna and flora in the Congo Basin between 2013 and 2023. These discoveries highlight the exceptional richness of this ecosystem considered the largest carbon sink in the world. Regarding forest governance, it is noted that despite industrialization efforts, only 4 out of 60 operators obtained FSC certification in 2024 due to corruption issues and failing infrastructure. The transitional government had therefore undertaken reforms to improve the situation. And in the context of regional cooperation for the preservation of tropical forests, the 20th partnership meeting of the PFBC was held in June 2024 in Kinshasa. These various events testify to Gabon's commitment to the sovereignty of its natural resources, to environmental conservation, and to sustainable development in the Congo Basin. This fully aligns with the vision of the NGO Brainforest, which is to achieve a Gabonese society in which the environment will be protected with the active participation of the populations who will benefit from the economic returns of the sustainable management of natural resources. In this unprecedented and uncertain political context, Brainforest had to reassure all its partners about its ability to execute ongoing projects in 2024 despite the reluctance due to the political and economic changes in the country. The NGO continued its mission to inform, train, and support all stakeholders in the sustainable and equitable management of natural resources through its 4 intervention axes, which were articulated around 8 major actions implemented during the year 2024. Annual Report 2024

Major Actions 2024 Support in the creation and management of community forests Advocacy for strengthening the legal framework for recognizing the rights and traditional lands of CLPA Capacity building: awareness and training of CLPA Participatory mapping Promotion of women's rights and reduction of inequalities Advocacy and position paper Development of economic alternatives: promotion of beekeeping Monitoring of CCC Annual Report 2024

Projects and Activities The Major Themes Forest Governance Strengthening the frameworks for sustainable forest management and promoting transparency in the forestry sector. Land Governance Securing land rights for local communities and indigenous populations. Extractive Industries Monitoring and advocacy for responsible practices in mining and oil exploitation. Agro-industry Promotion of sustainable agricultural practices that respect the environment. Mapping Creation of participatory maps to document traditional land uses. AGR or support for economic alternatives Development of income-generating activities in rural areas compatible with forest preservation. Projects Executed in 2024 For the year 2024, we executed 6 projects and 3 ad-hoc activities. It has been implemented in Gabon since 2021 and primarily operates in two provinces: Ogooué-Ivindo and Woleu-Ntem. It revolves around two main objectives: (i) the development of a coherent legal framework for the rights of CLPA and community forestry; (ii) the development of greater capacity in the practice of community forestry at the local level. The project is executed with the technical support of ClientEarth and the financial support of the Norwegian Agency for Development and Cooperation (NORAD) through Norway’s International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), for a duration of four years. The year 2024 focused on strengthening the capacities of beneficiary communities, supporting communities in integrating gender aspects into the management of community forests, assisting in the manufacturing and participation of communities in creating an elephant repellent to mitigate human-wildlife conflict, preparing communities for the revision of their Simple Management Plan (PSG), raising awareness about

the project for the generalization of forest certification in the Gabonese Republic, and finally, promoting good practices in the management of FC. The project “Establishing legal bases for forests and sustainable livelihoods” recorded 19 missions, 4 workshops, and 12 communities trained. Annual Report 2024

The project “Supporting independent forest monitoring via the Open Timber Portal (OTP)” recorded 2 missions, 2 workshops, a press conference, and 5 major actions taken as part of the project. It is executed in Gabon by the NGO Brainforest with the technical support of the Field Legality Advisory Group (FLAG) and the World Resources Institute (WRI) under the funding of the Norwegian Agency for Development (NORAD). Implemented since 2021, the project is nearing its end. Its objective is to increase transparency in the forestry sector by enhancing the visibility and credibility of the work of independent forest observers in the Congo Basin through the digital platform Open Timber Portal. Implemented in Gabon by Brainforest with the technical and financial support of Noé, Maison du Monde, and the company Olam Rubber Gabon. Its goal is to combat deforestation and poverty through village agroforestry based on shaded cocoa and non-timber forest products on the periphery of Minkébé National Park. The project operates in northern Gabon in the Woleu-Ntem province, specifically in Minvoul. Launched in 2019, the project trained 20 planters in 2024, conducted 2 field missions, established a cooperative, and developed the beekeeping sector. The project will conclude in early 2025. The project “Greening the land rights of forest communities in the Gabonese Republic” recorded 4 missions conducted, 5 communities strengthened in capacity, and 1 press point organized. The project “Strengthening the participation of civil society organizations and forest communities in improving practices and public forestry policies in the Gabonese Republic” recorded 2 field missions, 6 communities sensitized and trained, a meeting with administrative authorities, and the production of an analysis report. It is implemented in the provinces of Estuaire and Woleu-Ntem with the aim of promoting the development of more appropriate regulations regarding community rights in the forestry sector through a participatory approach involving forest communities and civil society organizations. The project benefits from technical and financial support from the GEF/UNDP administered by UNOPS. The project “Engaged Citizens” recorded 29 training workshops implemented by a consortium of organizations including two Gabonese ones: Brainforest and ReFleT, and two French ones: AEDH and Initiative Développement. It is executed in Gabon in the Woleu-Ntem provinces, with financial support from the European Union, the French Development Agency, and the French Embassy in Gabon through the PISCCA fund. The project aimed to strengthen the agency of women in Gabon, for a duration of 3 years from February 2022 to November 2024. Overall, the project recorded 29 training workshops with 17 CSOs including 100 women; 12 relay correspondents (CR) were identified and mobilized within the country; 8 restitution workshops organized by the CR with their communities and allies reaching 365 people including 265 women. There was also the creation of a website www.citoyennes-engagées.org with 13,968 visitors, 6,737 downloads; a digital campaign on social networks and a proximity communication campaign with over 245 people sensitized in the province; 22 practical and synthetic law sheets published; 2 testimonies from women victims of GBV published; 6 podcasts and 8 motivational and interview videos published; 1 directory of 14 key actors working on women's rights advocacy. The project “Cocoa under shade as zero deforestation economic development for village communities” is implemented in Gabon by the consortium of organizations Brainforest, MINAPYGA, and KEVA INITIATIVE. Executed since 2023 for a duration of 3 years with financial support from RRI under the Bezos funds. The overall objective of the project is to promote the rights of local communities and indigenous populations over land and natural resources to improve their living conditions and combat deforestation in the Gabonese Republic. 2 5 3 4 6

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Ad-hoc Activities Debate Conference on Forest Certification On April 12, 2024, Brainforest organized a debate conference on “opportunities related to wood professions and forest certification.” Organized with the technical and financial support of the Pulitzer Center, the activity aimed to raise awareness among young people from different sectors about the preservation of the Congo Basin forests through a quality discussion around forest certification and the employment and/or entrepreneurship opportunities it entails. The event saw the participation of 50 young professionals from various sectors of activity, technical and administrative partners in a discussion format between panelists and participants. Annual Report 2024 Óphoto: Brainforest

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Visit from the German Delegation On July 12, 2024, Brainforest received, at its headquarters, an important delegation from the Federal Republic of Germany led by Horst GRUNER, extraordinary and plenipotentiary ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Gabon. The discussions included issues related to environmental protection, forest preservation, community forest management, mangrove protection, local communities, and indigenous populations. Two partner organizations of Brainforest, Minapyga and KevaInitiative, participated in these discussions. Workshops on Conservation and Forest Management On April 4, 2024, Brainforest organized a workshop to validate the sub-regional implementation plan of the Forests, Peoples, and Climate (FPC) strategy in Gabon at the CENAREST premises, aimed at ending tropical deforestation and reversing the trend while ensuring sustainable development and inclusive rural transformation. On March 28, 2024, at the Hibiscus Hotel in Louis, Brainforest organized a national workshop to strengthen the capacities of community forest managers or key actors involved in their management. This activity was part of the effort to create a Federation of Gabonese Community Forests (FFCG). Annual Report 2024 Óphoto: Brainforest

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Results and Impacts In this report, we define results as a situation of improvement following an action or an effect that arises from an activity of a project. These results can be presented generally or specifically to a project. Results can be quantified or qualified through the impacts they produce, whether direct or indirect. The year 2024 allowed us to record several results: Signing of contractual specifications In the Estuaire province, specifically in Remboué between the IBNG company and the Makoula and Nzouameyong villages. Establishment of a national independent observation strategy Development of a structured framework for independent forest observation by CSOs. Training and awareness-raising of communities 43 local communities and indigenous populations trained and sensitized on their rights and sustainable resource management. Development of AGR Implementation of alternative and sustainable agricultural activities for local communities. Transformation and marketing of NTFPs Valorization of non-timber forest products to diversify the income sources of communities. Awakening of female leadership Strengthening the participation of women in the management of community forest associations. Financial Summary 0 FCFA 20,000,000 FCFA 40,000,000 FCFA 60,000,000 FCFA 80,000,000 FCFA 100,000,000 FCFA 120,000,000 FCFA ClientEarth Project WRI Project Greening Project AEDH Project GEF Project Tracer Project TRANSFERS EXPENSES ClientEarth Project 20% WRI Project -57% Greening Project -2% AEDH Project 0% GEF Project 21% Tracer Project 0% 397,021,850 FCFA 401,304,303 FCFA 4,282,453 FCFA TRANSFERS EXPENSES DIFFERENCE TOTAL DIFFERENCE PROJECTS Annual Report 2024

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43 2024 in Numbers 29 Field missions Communities sensitized 6 Projects 9 Workshops 29 Staff 41.38% women and 58.62% men 29 Mission reports 2 Press conferences 7 Actions Others 1 Agricultural cooperative Established

Our Partners Brainforest would like to thank all its technical and financial partners who made it possible to carry out its activities in 2024. Perspectives 2025 Strengthening forest governance Continue to promote transparency and inclusive participation in the management of forest resources. Expansion of community forests Further support communities in the creation and sustainable management of community forests. Development of sustainable income-generating activities Intensify support for economic alternatives that are environmentally friendly in rural areas. Advocacy for CLPA rights Strengthen advocacy actions for the recognition of traditional land rights.