

## PRESS RELEASE

February 24, 2023

### ONE FOREST SUMMIT : VOLUNTEERS MOBILIZED FOR FOREST PRESERVATION

Several volunteers will be present in Libreville from February 27 to March 3 to take part in the One Forest Youth Forum, which will be held prior to the One Forest Summit. A civil society initiative, the OFYF is a forum that aims to bring together the world's youth on the issues of sustainable management of forest ecosystems. It is an opportunity to bring youth together to discuss solutions that will be presented at the One Forest Summit.

The One Forest Summit in Libreville was announced during the COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, by President Emmanuel Macron and President Ali Bongo Ondimba. Its objective is to advance and renew collective ambition for the preservation and sustainable management of forests, which are essential to address interrelated global challenges, foremost among them climate change and biodiversity loss. The One Forest Youth Forum and the One Forest Summit should be important meetings to develop concrete solutions and encourage citizen participation, especially among young people. Three young people from Senegal and France, who have completed an international exchange and solidarity volunteer program, will participate in these exchanges in order to embody the commitment to the climate through missions and field projects and to encourage stakeholders to promote mobility and citizen mobilization and human exchanges, particularly among youth.

During the One Forest Youth Forum, a dedicated workshop will allow youth to dialogue and catalyze different initiatives to co-construct a concrete program to mobilize volunteers for forest preservation. This program will be inspired by the EUAV Forests project coordinated by France Volontaires, and by the recommendations on cross-mobility made by the Council for the Follow-up of the New Africa-France Summit during the regional forum "Our Future" held in Yaoundé in December 2022.

#### The delegation of volunteers

**Mbacké Ndiaye** is an agricultural entrepreneur and trainer in agroecology in Senegal. She holds a Master's degree in Taxonomy, Biodiversity, Ethnobotany and Conservation of Natural Resources (TABEC) from Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar. She was involved with the NEBEDAY association, which aims to promote participatory management of natural resources by and for the people. Her commitment to this structure allowed her to carry out a civic service volunteer mission in France with the agricultural high school of Montmorot from September 2019 to March 2020. Upon her return to Senegal, Mbacké was accompanied by OFII to set up an agricultural farm in her native village of Niéless (Fatick region).

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**Anthony Bracke** completed a mission in Madagascar between 2018 and 2021 as a volunteer of international solidarity (VSI) for France Volontaires, sent by its bureau in La Réunion. His mission was co-financed by the Reunion Region and by European funds via the Interreg V Indian Ocean program. His fieldwork was mainly scientific (mapping, biological inventories, ecosystem monitoring) and organizational (assistance in the creation and operation of fishermen's associations and village cooperatives). Anthony Bracke, an environmental engineer and activist, has since created his agroforestry structure as an entrepreneurial project. He has also launched a local association that supports villagers wishing to set up an agroforestry project and practice endemic reforestation for energy, construction and food. A bank of indigenous forest seeds from the northwest of Madagascar is being created.

**Maud Lepaon** was a young volunteer of the European Union's humanitarian aid, deployed in Cameroon within the framework of the FORESTS program led by France Volontaires and several partners and which ended in December 2022 (see below). This program mobilized 25 European volunteers of 6 nationalities to support local initiatives to strengthen forestry systems in 5 countries: Cameroon, Congo, Ghana, Togo, Vietnam. Its missions consisted mainly in supporting local civil society organizations by creating advocacy tools such as best practices sheets; offering training to strengthen their advocacy capacities and by bringing them together in a single group around environmental themes to increase the impact of their actions and their visibility; carrying out a diagnosis of the situation of indigenous peoples with regard to deforestation and climate change and promoting volunteerism (both national and international).

France Volontaires will also be represented by **Lucie Morillon**, Director of Communication, Valuation and Development of Commitment Pathways. She will be speaking at the Forum on 28 February on the High Level Panel: "Stimulating North-South Mobility: Volunteering and Sustainable Forest Growth".

## **The Forests program**

Implemented in Cameroon, Congo, Ghana, Guinea and Vietnam between 2019 and the end of 2022, Forests was a deployment program of 25 European volunteers aimed at promoting examples of sustainable cohabitation between forest areas and local communities. It aimed to protect forest areas threatened by human activity (timber trade, slash-and-burn, hunting, subsistence farming, etc.) and to preserve and promote sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

In the framework of the EU Aid Volunteers initiative, funded by the European Commission, France Volontaires, ESI Labs! (Latvia) and SRD (Vietnam) collaborated with the authorities and dozens of civil society organizations in five partner countries (Cameroon, Congo, Ghana, Guinea and Vietnam). Forests thus networked experienced Vietnamese partners in the forestry sector with partners in West Africa interested in tested good practices with proven impact.

## **About France Volontaires**

Operator of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, recognized as one of the actors of France's official development assistance by the Law of August 4, 2021, France Volontaires is the result of a shared construction that brings together the State, local authorities and associations around a mission of general interest: the development and promotion of the international volunteer exchange and solidarity program (VIES). The platform relies on a presence in France (metropolitan France and overseas territories) and on a network of Volunteer Spaces in Africa, Asia, Latin America/Caribbean, the Middle East and Oceania.)

A partnership cooperation mechanism, based on balanced relations between the North and the South, the International Volunteer Exchange and Solidarity program (VIES) is a powerful and cross-cutting tool for achieving the SDGs and taking concrete action for the planet.

In 2021, about 400 international solidarity and civic service volunteer missions abroad were linked to environmental protection.

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