

**Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund**  
No Objection Approval Pursuant to Section 4.1 of the Operational Manual

15 May 2024

**Revised Spending Authority for the Guinean Forests of West Africa Hotspot**

**1. Recommended Action Item**

The Donor Council is asked **to approve on a no-objection basis** an increase in the spending authority for the Guinean Forests and West Africa Hotspot by \$800,000 to include additional funding made available by the Hans Wilsdorf Foundation.

The total spending authority for the Guinean Forests and West Africa Hotspot will become \$12,800,000.

The deadline for no-objection approval is 29 May 2024.

**2. Background**

At its 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 20 January 2016, the Donor Council approved (CEPF/DC28/8a) the ecosystem profile for a second phase of investment in the Guinean Forests of West Africa (GFWA) Biodiversity Hotspot, with a spending authority of \$9 million.

On 5 November 2018, the Donor Council approved, by no-objection (CEPF/DC/electronic/56), an increase of \$3,000,000 in the spending authority for the hotspot, to include additional funding made available by l'Agence Française de Développement.

On 18 January 2024, the Hans Wilsdorf Foundation awarded a grant of \$15.1 million to CEPF for a project titled "Conserve two biodiversity hotspots (Mediterranean Basin and Guinean Forest of West Africa) by engaging and supporting organizational development of Civil Society". The Donor Council was notified of this funding at its 42<sup>nd</sup> meeting, on 15 February 2024 (CEPF/DC42/4). The funding from the Hans Wilsdorf Foundation includes funds for (1) an update to the GFWA ecosystem profile, leading to (2) grantmaking under a new investment phase in the region. The funding also includes \$1 million in support of a small grant mechanism in the GFWA Hotspot, of which \$800,000 is available for grant making. This money is meant to be a "bridge" prior to the inception of the third phase. To deploy these additional funds requires an increase in the spending authority from \$12,000,000 to \$12,800,000.

The small grant mechanism will be managed by BirdLife International, which served as the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) in the hotspot during the second phase, from July

2016 to August 2022. Approximately 12-15 small grants will be awarded to civil society organizations in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

### **3. Next steps**

At its 75<sup>th</sup> meeting, on 24 January 2024, the Working Group agreed that, based on the findings of the independent evaluation conducted in 2022, the Secretariat would continue to work with BirdLife as the RIT for the hotspot, subject to certain conditions. CEPF is working with BirdLife to ensure that it meets those conditions and will present this to the Working Group at a later date. Separately, work has begun on updating the ecosystem profile for the GFWA, in preparation for a third phase of investment in the hotspot. The updated profile will be presented to the Donor Council for approval in mid-2025. As noted above, part of the funding for this new phase has already been secured from the Hans Wilsdorf Foundation; the Secretariat is actively seeking additional sources of funding to enable a full reinvestment.