At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) announced the creation of “The Green Corridor Kivu-Kinshasa,” a groundbreaking environmental initiative that will establish the largest protected tropical forest reserve in the world. Known also as the “Pool of the Congo River,” this ambitious project aims to conserve one of the planet’s most biodiverse and ecologically vital regions: the Congo Basin.

President Tshisekedi stressed that the project would address critical global environmental issues while simultaneously fostering economic development and promoting lasting peace. “This extraordinary community reserve will span over 2,400 kilometers, connecting the Virunga National Park in the east, the vast forests of Ituri, and the Congo River from Kisangani to Kinshasa,” the president said.

The Congo Basin, often referred to as the “lungs of the Earth,” plays a central role in regulating the global climate by absorbing carbon dioxide. Tshisekedi emphasized that this region is home to unique species like mountain gorillas, the Okapi, and countless other plants and animals that are found nowhere else on Earth. Protecting these habitats is crucial not only for preserving biodiversity but also for maintaining the delicate balance of the planet’s ecosystems.

The Green Corridor project aims to combat rampant deforestation and mitigate the climate crisis by preserving nearly 108,000 square kilometers of pristine rainforest, as well as intact peatlands. The initiative promises to improve the livelihoods of over 31 million Congolese citizens, creating more than 500,000 jobs, with at least 20,000 of those jobs specifically aimed at integrating young people and former combatants back into society.

“The Green Corridor Kivu-Kinshasa will save the future of the Congo Basin and help meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement,” Tshisekedi noted. The corridor will also provide a lifeline for communities in DRC’s eastern provinces, which have long been affected by poverty, conflict, and instability. By generating jobs and sustainable economic activities, this initiative is poised to play a pivotal role in peacebuilding efforts, helping to bring stability to one of the most conflict-prone regions of Africa.

Several key global leaders have praised the project, highlighting its significance in the fight against climate change. Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum, lauded Tshisekedi’s commitment to linking sustainable development with peace. U.S. Special Envoy for Climate, John Kerry, also expressed strong support for

the initiative, calling it “a vital step in preserving the Congo Basin and giving millions of Congolese the tools to combat the worst impacts of the climate crisis.”

While the Green Corridor initiative has been hailed as a transformative solution for the DRC, experts caution that the project faces significant challenges. “The scale of the deforestation problem in the Congo Basin is staggering, and it will require massive international cooperation to effectively address it,” said Dr. Emily M. Waweru, a climate change expert. “Ensuring that the Green Corridor is properly protected while balancing the economic needs of the local population will be a delicate task.”

Local stakeholders have expressed hope that the initiative will not only improve conservation efforts but also stimulate regional stability. However, experts emphasize that achieving this balance will require ongoing investment in community engagement, education, and job creation.

The Green Corridor project offers a model of how environmental conservation can be integrated with economic development and peacebuilding. Tshisekedi’s vision aligns with international efforts to combat climate change, preserve biodiversity, and foster sustainable development.

The Congo Basin is home to some of the world’s most unique and endangered wildlife species, offering immense potential for eco-tourism. In addition to the iconic mountain gorillas of Virunga National Park, the region boasts rare animals like the elusive okapi, often referred to as the “forest giraffe,” and the vibrant Congo peafowl, found nowhere else in the world.

The African forest elephant and the shy bongo antelope add to the area’s allure, while the Congo Basin chimpanzees captivate with their intelligence and complex social behaviors. Promoting sustainable tourism centered on these species not only enhances the region’s global appeal but also provides crucial funding for conservation efforts, ensuring the protection of biodiversity and creating economic opportunities for local communities.

This initiative is set to become a flagship project for both the DRC and the broader African continent, setting a precedent for the kind of large-scale, integrated environmental solutions needed to address the climate crisis.

Meanwhile, the initiative is likely to face significant challenges, particularly in

balancing conservation efforts with the livelihoods of local communities who depend on the forest for survival. Experts warn that managing human-wildlife conflicts, addressing illegal logging, and combating poaching will require robust enforcement mechanisms and community involvement. Moreover, the success of eco-tourism depends on developing infrastructure in a sustainable manner without disrupting the fragile ecosystem.

Experts have also warned that sustainable tourism can thrive in the Green Corridor, but only if it is implemented with careful planning and collaboration with local stakeholders.