

From Belém to Geneva: Canopy Trust on the Building Bridges Solutions Stage

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Since its launch was announced in Belém, Canopy Trust has continued to engage with the partners; investors and institutions needed to turn forest commitments into bankable businesses in Central Africa. In October, that work led to Geneva, where Programme Manager Julie Goerig presented the initiative on the Solutions Stage of Building Bridges 2026.



Photo credits: Julie Goerig presents Canopy Trust on the Solutions Stage at Building Bridges 2026, Geneva. © Mark Henley / Building Bridges, 2026

Why Geneva Matters

[Building Bridges](#) gathers financiers, policymakers, international organizations and practitioners in Geneva around a shared aim: aligning finance with sustainable development. For an initiative that relies on DFIs and philanthropy to bring private investors into the Congo Basin, few venues bring together so many of the actors it needs to reach, from impact investors and fund managers to policymakers and multilateral institutions.

Unlocking Investment in Nature

On 6 October, Julie joined the session **Unlocking Investment in Nature and Ecosystem Restoration**, which brought together fund managers deploying blended finance, catalytic capital and high-impact investment strategies across Latin America, Africa, the Pacific and beyond.

The starting point was shared: nature-positive investment is increasingly recognized as essential to climate resilience, biodiversity and sustainable development, yet financing gaps remain wide in developing markets. From reef restoration and forest conservation to sustainable agriculture, the discussion explored how investors can scale out proven approaches that deliver environmental outcomes, community benefits, and long-term economic value.

What sets us apart is what we call capital acceleration: from the grants we receive, we invest into forest-positive businesses in the Congo Basin, with a return on investment, in views of recycling the capital. We invest where others cannot, we are agile and hands-on to build up the companies towards investment readiness, thanks to our Technical Assistance and Concessional Instruments

Julie Goerig, Programme Manager, Canopy Trust

A Blended Finance Model for the Congo Basin

Julie introduced [Canopy Trust](#), a programme hosted by the [Catalytic Finance Foundation](#) that offers blended finance solutions to attract private investment, limit deforestation and support socio-economic development in Central Africa. Public commitments of over USD 93 million from Germany, Norway, Belgium and the [Central African Forest Initiative \(CAFI\)](#) support the initiative, which in turns invest both at company level and fund level, through first-loss capital, which absorbs early losses so other traditional and commercial investors can enter into company and fund deals, enabling different risk-profile to support the same investment. This is the definition of blended finance. Canopy Trust aim is to mobilize at least USD 500 million in private investment in the Congo Basin by 2030.

The model is grounded in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Canopy Trust priority country, which holds roughly 60% of the Congo Basin's forests. Low-productivity farming and charcoal production for everyday energy needs to drive most forest loss. The developers Canopy Trust support, from solar-powered cassava processing to sustainable cocoa value chains and charcoal briquettes made from waste, aiming to meet demand for food and energy without clearing forest.

Conversations That Continue

Beyond the session, the days in Geneva offered space to meet investors, fund managers and policymakers, and to compare notes with initiatives facing similar questions in other regions.

The session's message echoed Canopy Trust's experience in the Congo Basin: proven models exist, and early, risk-sharing capital helps them reach the scale private investors can follow. With a new presence in Kinshasa and a growing pipeline, Canopy Trust will keep bringing its partners into conversations like this one.