



UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

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## Message for the International Day of Biodiversity

### Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director

**22 May 2011**--Biodiversity Day 2011 falls in the UN's International Year of Forests marking 12 months of celebrations and action towards improved conservation and management of these essential natural assets.

Forests are an issue with essential links to livelihoods, addressing climate change and other environmental challenges; the UN's Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development as a whole.

Forests are a key sector within UNEP's Green Economy work as nations look to strengthen all three pillars of sustainable development on the Road to Rio+20 taking place in June next year.

UNEP's report *Towards a Green Economy—Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication*—analyzed how investing 2 per cent of global GDP in 10 key sectors can, with the right enabling public policies, growth economies, generate jobs but in a way that keep humanity's footprint within ecological boundaries.

In respect to forests, the report analyzes the contribution that \$15 billion a year - or 0.03 per cent of global GDP - can make to greening this sector, including triggering greater investments in Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD).

Such investments can also assist in scaling-up tried and tested market mechanisms, including certified timber and the certification of rainforest products to payment for ecosystems and community-based partnerships.

Over the period 2011 to 2050, investment of \$15 billion annually, or 0.03 per cent of GDP, would raise the value added in the forestry industry by more than 20 per cent, relative to business as usual.

The report suggests that a transition to a Green Economy could increase forested land - currently close to 4 billion hectares - by over three per cent in 2020, eight per cent by 2030 and over 20 per cent by 2050, relative to business as usual.

This work will be taken forward as part of celebrations to mark World Environment Day on 5 June, globally hosted this year by India and involving activities in well over 100 countries world-wide.

Forests represent many things to many people including spiritual, aesthetic and cultural dimensions that are, in many ways, priceless. But they are also cornerstones of our economies, whose full economic value has all too often been invisible in national accounts of profit and loss.

On the International Day of Biodiversity, let us spread the word to the wider world of the importance of forest ecosystems to our lives and livelihoods and by acting as part of 'Celebrating Forests for People' throughout 2011 on the Road to Rio 2012.