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Programme des Nations Unies pour l'environnement Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente
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Reduced Emissions from Deforestation Opening Window for Green Economy Transition

New Partnerships Emerging from Climate Change Action that are Accelerating Sustainability Strategies

Durban (South Africa) / Nairobi, 8 December 2011 - Countries across the developing world are engaging with developed country governments and the private sector to simultaneously reduce emissions from forests and fast track transitions to a low carbon, resource efficient Green Economy.

These multiple benefits of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) were the focus of a side event at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP17) in Durban today – in particular plans by Indonesia to utilize around US\$1 billion-worth of funding from Norway under REDD+.

“In the same way that the Green Economy promotes sustainable, low carbon and resource-efficient economic growth, REDD+ also explicitly addresses the need for a balance between income growth, jobs and social equity”, said United Nations Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

“With just over six months until the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Brazil, countries ranging from Indonesia to Brazil and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are recognizing that REDD+ investments can offer myriad opportunities to boost green development in the 21st Century – through optimizing and enhancing ecosystem services, tackling climate change, improving water security or promoting green jobs. Mobilizing more partnerships such as that between Norway and Indonesia, or private sector funding is vital if the full potential of forests to contribute to a Green Economy is to be realized.”

“A green economy transition is worth pursuing not only because it is the best way forward, but also for what it does to bring millions of people out of poverty while conserving their ecosystems, improving their lives and enhancing their livelihood opportunities”, said Dr. Kuntoro Mangkusubroto, Head of the President’s Delivery Unit for Development Monitoring and Oversight and the Chair of the National REDD+ Task Force of the Republic of Indonesia.

Indonesia is at the forefront of international efforts to develop REDD+ as a viable opportunity for climate change mitigation and sustainable development – particularly in the country’s Kalimantan region.

“Efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation can only succeed as part of broader, green growth strategies that offer economic growth and low emission solutions for energy, agriculture and forests. Indonesia is very well positioned for success in this regard and I am pleased that Central Kalimantan is committed to demonstrate how this can be done”, said Mr. Erik Solheim, Minister of the Environment and International Development, Norway.

Significant areas of Kalimantan’s forests have been cleared for cash crops such as coffee and palm oil. But ongoing research led by the National REDD+ Task Force in partnership with the United Nations, supported by UNEP and other stakeholders, indicates that this is coming at a cost to other productive sectors such as mining, fisheries and the livelihoods of local people as well as challenging Indonesia’s biodiversity including the iconic orangutan.

Deforestation in the upper areas of Kalimantan’s river systems now means that during the summer months, river flows and levels are running low, which is reducing the ability of barges, carrying mining ores, to continue operating.

An assessment by the Government of Indonesia and partners estimates that if the ore is transported by road rather than by barge, it will be six times more expensive. The calculation does not include the costs of environmental impacts of road building and road transport.

The Heart of Borneo strategy, a World Wildlife Fund (WWF) initiative, aims to protect biodiversity by creating a network of protected forest areas. As part of its REDD+ Programme, Indonesia plans to plant palm oil and other crops on degraded lands rather than clearing virgin forest.

Overall the REDD+ funding, backed by smart public policies and both direct foreign investment and private sector funding, should assist Indonesia in its stated aims of realizing 7% GDP growth per annum by 2014; reducing unemployment to between 5 and 6 per cent and achieving a 26-41% reduction in the emissions of greenhouse gases by 2020. UNEP and other UN agencies have been requested to advise on a number of areas for intervention in Kalimantan, that would help realize multiple benefits from REDD+ for these stated goals.

REDD+ Opportunities in Other Regions

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) also has significant opportunities to integrate REDD+ in the country’s path towards a Green Economy.

Extending over 1.55 million km² and accounting for over half of Africa’s forest resources, the DRC’s tropical forests are a major provider of ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, soil regulation and biodiversity.

The DRC’s forests could provide a potential source of up to US\$900 million in annual revenue up to 2030 through REDD+ , in which the DRC is already engaged, according to UNEP’s Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment of the DRC, released in October 2011, which underlines the extraordinary potential of the country’s forest resources and other natural endowments, such as mineral reserves and renewable energy potential (in particular hydropower).

Such potential REDD+ revenue could further enhance the DRC's transition to a Green Economy through diversifying energy sources, reducing environmental damage caused by mining and promoting the country's emerging social economy to create more green jobs, according to the UNEP report.

South Africa

While South Africa is without large tropical forests, it has large areas of degraded land as a result of mining which, if replanted sensitively with thickets and shrubs, could capture carbon emissions while delivering improvements in water supplies, soil fertility, livelihoods and employment.

Dr Guy Midgley of the South African National Biodiversity Institute said: "There are, for example, opportunities to restore degraded landscapes in KwaZulu Natal and thickets in the Eastern Cape which could provide financial incentives to landowners and state-owned areas to pursue improved management, create livelihood opportunities for local people, and provide a basis for increasing biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, especially to projected climate change."

Early work suggests that there are around 1.2 million hectares of degraded land in the Eastern Cape alone. An estimated 350 tonnes of carbon could be sequestered per hectare in these systems—perhaps more under wetter conditions. If just 10 per cent of that area was reforested and restored, then with carbon prices assumed at US\$10 a tonne of carbon dioxide, this could be worth 7 million Rand a year and, over 30 years, perhaps around 200 million Rand.

In reality, these values would be less because of what are known as transaction costs, such as project development, and the cost of monitoring, report and verification of the projects outcomes.

Notes to Editors

A recent UN-REDD brief for policymakers outlines in more detail the multiple ways that REDD+ investments can support change mitigation and sustainable development. To download *REDD+ and a Green Economy: Opportunities for a mutually supportive relationship*, visit:

http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=6345&Itemid=53

About the UN-REDD Programme

The UN-REDD Programme is the United Nations Collaborative initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) in developing countries. The Programme was launched in September 2008 to assist developing countries prepare and implement national REDD+ strategies, and builds on the convening power and expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

“REDD+” goes beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

The Programme currently has 35 partner countries spanning Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America, of which 14 are receiving support to National Programme activities. These 14 countries are: Bolivia, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ecuador, Indonesia, Nigeria, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, the Philippines, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Viet Nam and Zambia. To-date, the UN-REDD Programme’s Policy Board has approved a total of US\$59.3 million for National Programmes in these 14 partner countries. These funds help to support the development and implementation of national REDD+ strategies.

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