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New UN iPhone Application Highlights Role of Ecosystems in Tackling Climate Change

Abu Dhabi (United Arab Emirates) / Nairobi, 13 December 2011 - How many mangroves does it take to offset a transatlantic flight? What consumer actions can we take to reduce damage to rainforests?

Answers to these questions and many more are provided by a new iPhone application launched by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at the Eye on Earth summit in Abu Dhabi today.

The UNEP application draws attention to the critical role played by ecosystems such as salt marshes, mangroves, tropical forests and seagrasses in tackling climate change.

Users of the application can calculate their personal carbon footprint for journeys taken by air, train or road. They will then be shown the equivalent area of a particular ecosystem (such as a tropical forest) that can store this amount of carbon dioxide.

The free iPhone application, named *Blue and REDD Carbon*, is already available online in English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Japanese, Russian and Spanish.

Blue and REDD Carbon

The iPhone application provides users with in-depth information on the vital role of coastal and terrestrial ecosystems in both storing and sequestering carbon.

The Blue Carbon concept aims to promote better management of coastal ecosystems such as mangrove forests, seagrass meadows, saltwater marshlands, which serve as vital 'carbon sinks', and can store, in the case of mangrove forests, up to 1,900 tons of carbon dioxide per hectare.

Information on other key climate initiatives, such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) is provided.

The UNEP application also highlights the valuable natural services provided by ecosystems, such as the protection of shorelines from storms, support for fisheries and provision of materials such as timber and medicine.

According to UNEP's Forests in a Green Economy report, released earlier this year, forest ecosystems provide more than a billion people with incomes and employment and contribute approximately US\$ 468 billion to the global economy. Equatorial rainforests also contain around half of all plant and animal species known on Earth.

Yet many of these vital ecosystems are disappearing at an alarming rate, due to deforestation, pollution from agricultural run-off, water diversion and other factors.

The *Blue and REDD Carbon* application provides a variety of suggestions and guidelines to show how individual actions (such as buying sustainably-sourced fish) can help limit the environmental degradation of coastal and terrestrial ecosystems.

One UN Pavilion at Eye on Earth

The application was launched during the official opening of the One UN Pavillion at the Eye on Earth Summit in Abu Dhabi. The four-day event, organized by the Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative (AGEDI) and hosted by the Abu Dhabi Environment Agency in partnership with UNEP, brings together experts from the worlds of philanthropy, business, government, data engineering and technology to address issues around access to environmental data and knowledge.

The summit is set to deliver a declaration towards the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), which will be held in Brazil in June 2012.

The One UN Pavillion at Eye on Earth will display information illustrating the work of the United Nations in the area of environmental data and its application in a wide variety of settings, such as environmental assessment work, humanitarian responses and peace building. Interactive exhibits will present visitors with a wide variety of scientific data on climate change, hazardous wastes and substances, ecosystems management and other topics.

The Global Pulse, the UN Secretary-General's technology for development initiative, will also be highlighted. Global Pulse functions as an innovation laboratory, bringing together expertise from UN agencies, governments, academia, and the private sector to research, develop, test and share tools and approaches for harnessing real-time data for more effective and efficient policy action.

Notes to Editors:

The iPhone application can be download from the Apple store.

A more direct downloading location than the Apple Store:

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/unep-carbon-calculator/id47990891?mt=8>

For more information, please contact:

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