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Secretary-General

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TIME FOR GLOBAL ACTION TO PROTECT FORESTS IS NOW, SECRETARY-GENERAL TELLS

'AVOIDED DEFORESTATION PARTNERS' EVENT AT CANCUN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks, as prepared for delivery, to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Sixteenth Conference of Parties Avoided Deforestation Partners Event, in Cancun, today, 8 December:

I am pleased to see so many partners working in common cause to protect the world's tropical forests.

We are here in Cancun to make progress on all fronts in the climate negotiations. At the same time, we need to dramatically increase actions that will help to prevent runaway climate change and strengthen climate resilience. That is why it is essential that we do all we can to support the REDD-Plus initiative — Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation.

Some estimates show that deforestation has contributed up to one fifth of global carbon emissions, more than the world's entire transportation sector. REDD-Plus cannot solve the problem on its own. But preventing deforestation and sustainably managing forests does offer four significant advantages.

First, we already know how to do it, so gains are a given. Second, it can have an immediate effect in reducing emissions. Third, it is one of the most cost-effective climate change mitigation measures available. Fourth, it has multiple co-benefits, including soil conservation, flood control and biodiversity protection. Such services are worth many billions of dollars.

Protecting forests is vital for sustaining ecosystems and providing sustenance and income for more than a billion people. I am happy to see that willingness to act on this issue is growing. REDD-Plus has united Governments, non-governmental organizations, indigenous communities and the private sector. Just three years ago, few people had heard of the initiative. Today, more than 70 countries from North and South have joined to put REDD-Plus on the global agenda.

Many developing countries have taken significant steps to protect their forests. Industrialized countries have provided generous support. The UN-REDD Programme, together with the Forest Investment Partnership and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, is showing how the United Nations and the Bretton Woods system can collaborate.

REDD-Plus has great potential — to protect forests and spark the creation of low-carbon initiatives around the globe. Developing countries are willing to lead, working in sovereign partnership with developed nations. Let us ensure they receive appropriate financial and technical support. I encourage donors to fulfil their pledges on REDD-Plus fast-start finance, to scale up these amounts for the period beyond 2012, and to establish transparent systems to distribute payments and measure results.

The time for global action to protect forests is now. The world needs successful examples of climate solutions that produce tangible results. We need to provide hope to a global public growing cynical about the slow progress in meeting the climate challenge.

Here in Cancun, a framework agreement on REDD-Plus is within our grasp, as is immense progress on the ground. Let us seize them both.

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