

\$18 Million Approved Under UN-REDD Programme

Funds Will Back Forestry Programmes Combating Climate Change and Boosting Local Livelihoods

March 2009 - A United Nations programme aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from forests and boosting livelihoods in tropical nations has approved \$18 million in support of five pilot countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The UN-REDD Programme, a collaboration between the Food and Agriculture Organization, the UN Development Programme and the UN Environment Programme was launched to ensure that Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD) becomes an important component of a future agreement on climate change to be agreed under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2009 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The \$18 million-worth of funding, roughly a third of the sums currently available, has been approved by inaugural Policy Board meeting of Programme which met in Panama. The funding will support action plans to assist the countries concerned prepare for the inclusion of REDD in a new climate deal. An additional \$6.9 million were approved for global support functions.

During the high level Policy Board meeting, senior government representatives of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania, and Viet Nam, presented their plans for preparing national strategies for a future REDD regime. The presentation of the national programmes served as valuable learning and sharing experiences among participants on the way forward.

"This is a very significant first step for the UN-REDD Programme", said Angela Cropper, UN Assistant Secretary General and UNEP Deputy Executive Director, who chaired the meeting.

"I am heartened to see such a dedicated group of countries, indigenous peoples, civil society, donors and the United Nations come together to reach consensus on this important programme. I am confident that the Programme will have a substantial input to the continuing REDD debate."

Many countries will implement their individual strategies aimed at maintaining their ecosystems through sustainable forest management that provides environmental and economic benefits to their citizens and communities while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Activities will include monitoring programmes, consultative processes for engaging indigenous peoples and civil society, links to other benefits such as biodiversity and the strengthening the capacity of national institutions to address these issues.

In addition to the countries currently engaged in the programme implementation, the Policy Board includes members of indigenous peoples groups and civil society as well as donors and many other interested parties such as the World Bank and the Global Environment Facility secretariat.

Ambassador Hans Brattskar, Director of Norway's Forest and Climate Programme whose country is funding the UN-REDD Programme said: "I am pleased with this significant outcome. We are moving in the right direction and I am very happy to see the approval of country programmes that will begin to address REDD at the national level. We are convinced that these countries will help to advance REDD and serve as demonstrations from which others can learn."

Between 1990 and 2005 the rate of deforestation averaged 13 million hectares, mostly in the Tropics.

Greenhouse gas emissions with felling, slash and burn agriculture and other deforestation effects, account for around 17 per cent or more of global emissions-the second largest source after the energy sector.

By 2100 clearing of tropical forests could release 87 to 130 Gigatonnes of carbon to the atmosphere.

Notes to Editors

UN-REDD was launched in September last year by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Prime Minister of Norway Jens Stoltenberg. Its web site is at www.un-redd.net

Nine countries have already expressed formal interest in receiving assistance through the UN-REDD Programme- Bolivia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Tanzania, Viet Nam, and Zambia.

The 15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will take place between 7 and 18 December.

In 2007 at the 13th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) countries agreed the Bali Action Plan.

It mandates Parties to negotiate a post-2012 instrument including possible financial incentives for forest-based climate change mitigation actions in developing countries.

The Bali meeting also adopted a decision on 'Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries' encouraging parties to explore a range of actions in this field.

For More Information Please Contact

Nick Nuttall, UNEP Spokesperson/Head of Media, on Mobile in Kenya +254 (0) 733 632755, Mobile when travelling +41 79 596 57 37, E-mail: nick.nuttall@unep.org

Peter Holmgren Director, Environment, Climate Change and Bioenergy Division FAO, on Mobile: +39 340 252 3871, E-mail: peter.holmgren@fao.org

Stanislav Saling, UNDP Communications Officer in New York, Tel: +1 212 906 5296, E-mail: stanislav.saling@undp.org.