

LOCAL INCEPTION WORKSHOP IN LAM DONG:
**UN REDD Joint Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest
Degradation (REDD)**
November 26 2009

H.E. Mr. Hua Duc NHI, Vice Minister (MARD), Vice Chairman of Lam Dong People's Committee, UNDP Country Representative Setsuko Yamazaki, FAO Representative Andrew Speedy, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I am very pleased and honoured to be here in Lam Dong and to participate at this important workshop.

Let me first of all acknowledge the Vietnamese government's commitment to reduce emissions from the forest sector and commend the government for the important work being done. Through these efforts, Vietnam contributes significantly to the international efforts to include reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in an international agreement on REDD.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate Lam Dong People's Committee and the province's inhabitants in their REDD efforts, including organising this important event. The community's involvement is crucial in order for REDD to become a success and this workshop will hopefully build a better understanding of the REDD process for everybody involved.

This workshop comes at a very important and critical point in time. Our negotiators have just returned from Barcelona and only a few weeks separate us from COP15 in Copenhagen in December.

It is becoming clear that a legally binding agreement in Copenhagen may no longer be a realistic goal. Our focus should now be on reaching consensus on a political agreement where implementation could start immediately. In this context, the process on REDD calls for a certain degree of optimism. If we in December manage to agree on a political decision agreement on the way forward on REDD, we can still continue our important task of early implementation of REDD. Therefore, what will happen here in Lam Dong can influence the future of the REDD process.

The importance of the world's forests in our struggle to reduce global warming is becoming clearer every day. However, forests are vanishing rapidly. About 130 000 km² – roughly the size of England – is lost every year. The loss of these forests generates almost a fifth of all the world's greenhouse gas emissions, more than the total emitted by cars, boats, buses and planes. If we are to have any chance of curbing global warming and avoiding the most serious impacts of rising temperatures, we must save the world's forests. The maximum 2 degrees target cannot be reached unless we make use of the potential to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

Norway has great faith in REDD. Our government has pledged up to 500 million USD a year to these efforts. We believe that we can reduce global deforestation rates dramatically in the next few years at a relatively low cost. The cost-effectiveness ratio of REDD is very high if compared to alternative ways of reducing emissions. But we have no time to lose.

Norway channels financial support through the ongoing multilateral initiatives for support to developing countries REDD efforts, such as the initiatives of the World Bank and the UN, as well as the many important activities and programmes of civil society organisations.

It is our strong belief that this will be beneficial for several reasons. Tropical forests hold the largest, most cost-efficient short term mitigation potential. Forests are also vital for the livelihoods of millions of poor people and are treasuries of biodiversity. Finally, forests carry out important ecosystem functions which may be important to reduce the most drastic effects of global warming in these countries.

We know that changing deforestation patterns is a challenging task for any country. The economical and political risks involved for the leaders of these countries should not be underestimated.

Forests are important resources for nearly everyone living in these countries. Poor farmers need to clear forested areas for farming. Many people – even those living far from the forested areas - depend on trees for fuel. Large companies have established their income on plantations and industrial agriculture or cattle farming.

Countries which take on REDD intend to develop in a way that minimizes the extensive use of forest resources. This requires difficult changes within each country.

We should all appreciate the boldness of countries like Vietnam which agree to initiate such major changes. They take on the important task of preserving the forests for the sake of all of us; and they must be rewarded.

We believe Vietnam can become one of the success stories of REDD that will be told to the world to help convince world leaders that REDD is possible. The experiences from Vietnam and Lam Dong province, the community's efforts and the capacities built here will help catalyze a successful outcome for REDD in Copenhagen this year.

Let me again express the gratitude of Norway to all of you who have been involved in developing the Vietnam REDD programme and REDD activities over the last year. I really look forward to follow the progress and process of Vietnam and Lam Dong province and in your efforts to reduce emissions from forests.

Let me end by wishing you good luck with the continued REDD efforts, success with this workshop and good health to all of you.

Thank you for listening.

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Hanoi