

## PRESS RELEASE

### Call to further value the significant potential of Blue Carbon activities for supporting climate change mitigation

#### *For immediate release*

**Brussels, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2012:**

The critical role of coastal ecosystem management in curbing climate change and the need to fully integrate it in climate change and biodiversity policies were the focus of the “**Blue Carbon – Managing coastal ecosystems for climate change mitigation**” symposium that took place in the European Parliament today.

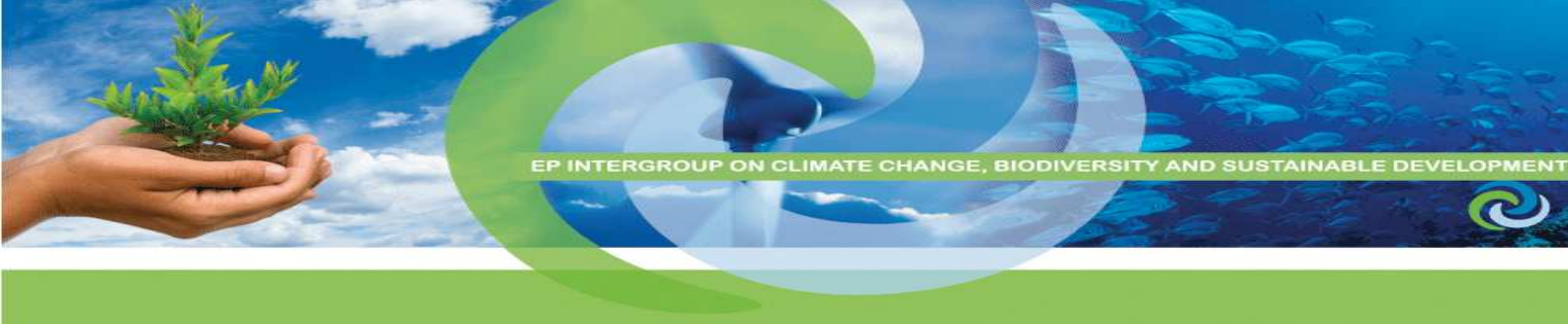
“Preserving and restoring coastal and marine ecosystems should be fully integrated in all climate change mitigation strategies and biodiversity policies at International and European level”, argued **Struan Stevenson, Member of the European Parliament** and Chair of the symposium.

**Pia Bucella, Director in DG Environment, European Commission** urged the European Parliament as the political arm of the EU to raise the profile and encourage the integration of coastal Blue Carbon-based activities, such as the conservation and restoration of these systems.

Blue Carbon is the carbon stored by coastal and ocean ecosystems. A square mile of coastal ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrasses and tidal marshes, which can be found all over the world except Antarctica, can store and remove more carbon from oceans and the atmosphere than a square mile of mature tropical forests.

But coastal and marine ecosystems are at high risk from pollution, growing coastal activities and unsustainable management practices. Speakers at the symposium warned that the continued disappearance will have a negative impact on climate change: when lost, they stop sequestering CO<sub>2</sub> and release the carbon they have been storing for centuries. “A single 100g shrimp cocktail that is unsustainably produced through mangrove clearance can have a carbon footprint equivalent to 40 liters of gasoline”, said **Dr. Boone Kaufman, Professor Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Oregon State University**.

“Blue Carbon provides new compelling reasons to urgently prevent the loss of marine and coastal ecosystems and biodiversity”, said **Dan Laffoley, Vice Chair of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas- Marine**. “It’s not just about marine habitats or species, but also about the 'hidden' value they have for humankind. Increasing the restoration and sustainable management of these critically important ecosystems through strong political



leadership and ambitious actions is a necessary prerequisite for successful climate change strategies.”

“We need to employ a targeted strategy that prioritizes the conservation of specific, high-carbon coastal zones,” stressed **Dr. Emily Pidgeon, Senior Director of Strategic Marine Initiatives at Conservation International**. “The challenge we face is to show how these ecosystems provide a service, acting as a carbon sponge, and their conservation does not stand as a roadblock to development or food production.”

Bringing together high level International and European policy makers, experts and stakeholders, the Symposium was held back to back with the second workshop of the International Blue Carbon Policy Working Group. The International Blue Carbon Policy Working Group is part of the Blue Carbon Initiative, the first integrated programme focused on mitigating climate change by conserving and restoring coastal marine ecosystems globally. The initiative is led by Conservation International (CI), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Intergovernmental Oceanic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, working with partners from national governments, research institutions, NGOs, coastal communities, intergovernmental and international bodies and other relevant stakeholders.

[http://www.marineclimatechange.com/marineclimatechange/bluecarbon\\_BrusselsPolicy\\_files/BlueCarbon\\_COMPRESSED.pdf](http://www.marineclimatechange.com/marineclimatechange/bluecarbon_BrusselsPolicy_files/BlueCarbon_COMPRESSED.pdf)

The event was organized by the Secretariat of the European Parliament Intergroup “*Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development*”, run jointly by the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), with the support of Conservation International Europe.

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