



PRESS RELEASE

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Interim REDD+ finance mechanism can save us billions of dollars and reduce significantly emissions from deforestation

Brussels, April 19th 2010: As cited by Mr Franco, “Forests precede people and deserts follow them”. The actual situation demonstrates the pertinence of this quote of the French writer François-René de Chateaubriand. Deforestation and illegal logging affect many parts of the world. Deforestation is responsible for 17% of worldwide carbon emissions, which is equivalent to the emissions of the industrial sector or those of road, maritime and air transport together.

“**Challenges of deforestation**” are therefore worldwide, requiring transboundary solutions. At the conference organised on 14 April at the European Parliament by the Intergroup on “Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development”, representatives from the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Ministry of Environment of Norway, the Embassy of Congo Brazzaville, IUCN, IKEA, FERN and PROGIS provided interesting views on this critical issue. The outcome will contribute to the ongoing public consultation on options for an EU approach to forest protection and information, launched by the European Commission this year. The event was chaired by **Mr Franco, Member of the European Parliament (MEP) and Chair of the subgroup “Forestry” of the Intergroup.**

Owing to the significant role of forests as carbon sinks – forests store 77% of all carbon stored in vegetation -, reducing deforestation and improving land management could contribute to meeting the climate target of keeping temperature to 2°C target above preindustrial levels. Interestingly, this goal can be achieved at relatively low cost compared to other sectors. “Forests therefore have to be part of the global climate change deal”, said **Mr Broekhoven – IUCN** -. Critical elements of an effective REDD+ mechanism, underscored by **Mr Agne – DG Climate Change, European Commission** – are: establishing institutional structures, getting reliable data on the situation of forests and monitoring systems.

Interestingly, a process to set up an interim REDD+ partnership is under way. **Mr Jørgensen - Ministry of Environment of Norway** - explained that this partnership could “create a coherent framework for discussing bilateral and multilateral REDD+ initiatives, and promoting shared goals such as a framework for sustainable development, transparency and coordination.” In this regard, interim finance for REDD+ is critical. A report released last autumn by the Informal Working Group for REDD+ interim finance concluded that if we had between 15 to 25 billion Euros available for the next 6 years we could reduce emissions from deforestation by 25%.

The EU is a driving force both at the International and European level. A mechanism to reduce carbon emissions put in place by the EU is the emissions trading scheme. In order to make this system more efficient, **Mr Angelidis - DG IPOL, European Parliament** - voiced his support to include forests in this system. Such a decision would promote ambitious forest projects in Asian, Latin America and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

Furthermore, the European Parliament is examining in second reading the proposal for a regulation on the illegal trade of timber and wood products. Although **Mr Fjellner – MEP, Shadow Rapporteur for the Regulation** - welcomed Ms Caroline Lucas’ report, he criticised the tendency to broaden considerably the scope of the regulation. Imposing too many requirements to the forest actors will lead to unsatisfactory results. “It would be sad to see that a too heavy administrative burden would result in the increasing use of unsustainable products such as plastics or aluminium “, he said. **Ms Maaskant – IKEA, Member of the Retail Timber Coalition** - echoed these words by insisting on the need to have a “workable and enforceable regulation”.

The EU is also active with its counterparts in the fight against illegal logging. **Ms Leal – FERN** – stated that Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) represent an efficient tool for improving forest governance. She nevertheless emphasized some loopholes such as the insufficient participation of civil society, the lack of transparency and independent monitoring. An example of the success of the VPAs is the one signed with the Republic of Congo-Brazzaville in 2009. As underlined by **Mr Lekaka – Embassy of Congo-Brazzaville in Belgium** - besides the fight against illegal logging, this agreement has delivered multi-benefits, especially for local population: schools rehabilitation, modernisation of the health system, jobs etc.

The private sector also has a role to play in managing forests sustainably. **PROGIS** represented by **Mr Mayer**, has developed a dynamic mapping tool for fields and forests, called WINGIS, which includes qualitative parameters such as carbon as well as traceability elements.

This meeting was organized by the Secretariat of the Intergroup composed jointly of the European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

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Contact: Secretariat of the Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development

European Bureau for Conservation and Development (EBCD) – Mélanie LAMAISON – Email: melanie.lamaison@ebcd.org – Ph: +322-230-30-70