



Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **The 6th Annual Governors' Climate and Forest Task Force (GCF) Meeting Opens in Chiapas, Mexico with a Message of Inclusion and a Need for a Change in Consciousness**

**San San Cristóbal de las Casas, September 25, 2012** – The Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force (GCF) convened its [6<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting](#) in Chiapas, Mexico with attendance by Governors, delegates and stakeholders from Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru and the United States. Attendees were welcomed by the Governor of Chiapas, Juan Sabines Guerrero, with a message of inclusion and a need for a change in consciousness. He stated, *“Our earth is calling us to action, calling us to shift our awareness. We must conserve our forests and replant, we must develop sustainably and we must do this all in harmony with the needs of our people.”* The Governor went further to say, *“We come together at this meeting to continue helping each other as jurisdictions holding within our borders one-fifth of the world's tropical forests. We are sharing lessons, experiences and policies on how to achieve our collective goals. We invite all voices to this meeting table to create shared and lasting solutions, tailored to address our specific situations.”*

The meeting [agenda](#) presents 3-days of discussions on different approaches to the equitable implementation of climate and forest initiatives such as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) and low emissions rural development with status and progress reports delivered by leading practitioners in [GCF jurisdictions](#). The meeting also highlights the relationship between state and national level initiatives and the need to harmonize regulations and policies to reduce deforestation. Stakeholders are gathering to share ideas and concerns and to help ensure a comprehensive process that integrates all perspectives. Global experts will share best practices on topics such as “social and environmental safeguards” and leading tools and methodologies to “monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV).”

William Boyd, GCF Senior Advisor and Project Lead, said, *“This is a critical moment for the GCF as we discuss ways forward for REDD+ and low emissions rural development in the context of significant uncertainty regarding international climate policy. The GCF provides an important platform for supporting and enhancing existing stakeholder processes in member jurisdictions and promoting learning and collaboration across the member states and provinces. Our view is that real policy innovation will only emerge if these processes are robust and include all stakeholders. Our annual meetings provide a unique opportunity for GCF representatives and stakeholders from across the world to come together, share experiences, and discuss ways forward. We are very excited to be here in Chiapas to learn more about what is happening in Mexico from the local civil society groups and to have a productive, open and honest discussion with governments and their civil society partners about the challenges and the opportunities facing the GCF.”*

Daniel Nepstad, Executive Director of the Amazon Environmental Research Institute's International Program (IPAM-IP) stated, *“With a strong focus on social and environmental safeguards grounded in a comprehensive public consultation process, REDD+ provides an enormous opportunity for communities, jurisdictions and tropical forest countries to conserve their forests while improving rural life. The potential of REDD+ has so far remained largely unrealized. Now is the moment to make sure that REDD+ fulfills the original vision: To be a policy framework for a new model of sustainable, equitable, low-emission rural development that is state-wide and eventually nation-*

*wide in scope. It is through this scale that we significantly implement climate change mitigation measures and the GCF provides us that framework.”*

Rosa Ma Vidal, Director, Pronatura Sur, a Mexican NGO explained, *“We need to ensure that new land use policies such as REDD+ consider the experiences of local forest communities in Mexico. Communities have demonstrated that local governance and income from active management of forest products provides a viable solution to deforestation. Integrated land use policies and the allocation of fiscal funding in Mexico could reduce deforestation using our own national resources. All REDD+ policies should consider the rights of indigenous peoples and forest communities to sustain and advance their livelihoods. Stakeholder involvement is a fundamental part of the GCF process and these meetings invite that opportunity for direct engagement between all parties.”*

Sharing with meeting attendees the developments and priorities from Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, Governor Teras Narang said, *“We have been selected as the first pilot province for REDD+ implementation in Indonesia. Driven by our commitment to the inseparable link between livelihoods and the wellness of our forests, we work closely with the National REDD+ Task Force and communities to implement regulations that recognize and respect indigenous knowledge and customary territorial rights in Central Kalimantan. No REDD+ can happen without transparency and delivery of benefits to the respective community. Our Province REDD+ Strategy adopted the fundamental pillars of good governance guided by the aspirations of all stakeholders.”*

Governor Sebastião Afonso Viana Macedo Neves from Acre, Brazil stated, *“By valuing our environmental assets and developing fair and efficient programs that conserve our natural resources, we’re advancing social equity and sustainable economic development for our indigenous communities who live in the forests and for our small rural producers, the ‘Ribeirinhos’.”*

A common challenge for jurisdictions designing and implementing REDD+ and low emissions rural development strategies is achieving the balance between economic growth and environmental preservation. Governor Awang Faroek Ishak from East Kalimantan, Indonesia provided a statement in which he said, *“Our economy has grown significantly over the last decade. However, this has come at a cost to the environment. Since 1950, East Kalimantan has reduced its forest cover by 35% or 7 million hectares. We are engaged in building widespread awareness for our ‘Green Growth Strategy.’ As a start, we have implemented a ‘1 man 5 trees’ program where with 3.5 million people planting, we can begin to have a real impact in what we see around us, and perhaps more significantly, how we see ourselves in nature—not just as exploiters, but also as caretakers.”*

Governor Simão Jatene from Pará, Brazil shared the same perspective on the need for sustainable development stating, *“It is no longer possible to think of conservation and production as two separate things. It is necessary to understand that conservation means production and production means conservation.”*

GCF member states and provinces are tangibly demonstrating that economic development can be achieved hand-in-hand with emissions reductions. The commitment to sustainable low emissions rural development has been realized in the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil. The Governor, Silval Barbosa, said, *“In recent decades, Mato Grosso had high rates of deforestation in the Amazon. Since 2006, we have been developing pioneering solutions to improve forest governance, safeguards and the system for environmental licensing and registration of rural properties. The result has been significant. Mato Grosso was responsible for a 60% reduction in deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon, which corresponds to a reduction of 1.1 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub>, much higher than the*



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*reduction commitment of the vast majority of Annex I countries in the Kyoto Protocol. To provide additional incentive for forest conservation, to maintain environmental services and generate social and climate benefits, we hope to sanction this year the law creating the 'State System of REDD+', which was developed through two year's of participatory work with various segments of society through the Matogrosense Forum on Climate Change. We are reversing the economic logic that has historically sustained deforestation and transforming the way we develop."*

The need to increase technical REDD+ capacity is present in countries and jurisdictions around the world. To provide GCF members access to state-of-the-art Geographic Information System and remote sensing technologies and methodologies for forest monitoring, in July of this year, the GCF hosted a weeklong workshop for technical staff from member jurisdictions with its partners, IPAM, the Carnegie Institution for Science, the Woods Hole Research Center and Google. Greg Asner, Staff Scientist at the Carnegie Institution's Department of Global Ecology applauded the workshop attendees for their commitment to advancing MRV in their jurisdictions. *"By learning various computer-based mapping tools, including CLASlite, these participants are now able to use a consistent approach for monitoring any forest in the world, which in turn, supports a more open and transparent reporting environment to facilitate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation."*

Rebecca Moore, Engineering Manager, Google Earth Outreach and Google Earth Engine, further supported this MRV capacity building initiative and said, *"We're impressed by the ambitious vision of the GCF member jurisdictions to build bridges and common REDD+ capacity across so many diverse geographies, languages, cultures and institutions. We're excited to help turn that vision into a reality through our tools such as Google Earth Engine and our high-performance computing power. Our goal is to significantly reduce the barriers to globally-consistent REDD+ implementation."* By taking these skills home and training other staff, participants are now able to build technical MRV capacity at scale.

Governor Liyel Imoke from Cross River State, Nigeria provided in a statement, *"Through partnerships with the GCF and other organizations, we are training our people on how to develop the technical capacity to monitor their own forests to ensure a sustainable future. We are laying the foundation for REDD+ with capacity building workshops that leverage international expertise to scale-up our abilities in our state and country. These workshops have helped our citizens realize that they all have a role in defining our future."*

The GCF is a unique subnational collaboration between 17 states and provinces from Mexico, Brazil, Indonesia, Nigeria, and the United States that seeks to build REDD+ and low emissions rural development programs and link them with emerging market and non-market opportunities. Deforestation accounts for more than 15% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. More than 20% of the world's tropical forests are in GCF states and provinces (including approximately 75% of Brazil's and more than half of Indonesia's tropical forests). The Chiapas GCF meeting is hosted at the Casa Mazariegos Convention Center in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas from September 25-27 between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. This meeting is open to all interested stakeholders.

**For media information regarding the GCF Annual Meeting, contact Keyvan Izadi, GCF Communications Director, at [media@gcftaskforce.org](mailto:media@gcftaskforce.org) / +521 967 103 0661.**

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