



For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact:
James Clarke at +45 4017 6143/+62 812 113 4889 or j.clarke@cgiar.org
Jeff Haskins at +254 729 871 422 or jhaskins@burnesscommunications.com

The Time is Now if the World's Forests are to be Saved for Climate Protection, says Major International Conference

This Year's Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom, with Other Global Leaders including Bill Clinton, Rajendra Pachauri, Gro Harlem Bruntland, Lord Nicholas Stern, and Wangari Mathai Joined Activists and Academics to Call for Action on Forests in Copenhagen

Opportunities to Use Forests for Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation are Exceptionally Good, but Many Challenges Lie Ahead

In a New Polling System, Participants Identified the Top Two Barriers to Successful REDD+

COPENHAGEN (14 December 2009)—As agreement nears on incorporating forest mitigation into a new climate protection accord, close to 1,500 forestry experts, policymakers and activists gathered in Copenhagen yesterday to urge politicians to make the most of a once in a lifetime opportunity to conserve forests and contribute to climate change mitigation, a policy option usually referred to as REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation).

Elinor Ostrom, who received the Nobel Prize for economics in Oslo last week, made a passionate call for local communities to be fully recognized as a part of the process for developing and implementing REDD+. There is a risk that the process will become far too “top down,” she told a packed plenary session. “Simple formulas may sound good, but they don’t have the desired result. Such has been the case, for example, with the classical top-down approach of establishing government protected forest areas. Far more effective are approaches that gain the trust of forest communities, respect their rights, and involve them in forest use and monitoring, practices that are positively associated with maintenance of forest density.”

Participants also emphasized the role forests should play in helping communities adapt to climate change. There is a lack of awareness about how ecosystem-based adaptation can be a cost-effective solution to climate-induced environmental stress. Synergies need to be sought between the role of forests as agents of climate change mitigation and their role in adaptation. There was wide support for a ‘Marshall Plan’ for forest-based adaptation.

Commenting via a video address, former US President Bill Clinton said that the global community must give more attention to helping poor communities adapt to climate change already underway. “None of this will be easy, or it would have been done before,” he said. “But it can be done.”

But caution was also urged. Many challenges lie ahead if REDD+ is to be successfully implemented, according to the principles of the 3Es: efficiency, effectiveness and equity. In voting sessions, delegates saw a lack of equity as a major barrier to successfully implementing REDD.

“The poll highlights the challenges ahead for implementing REDD+,” said Markku Kanninen, a senior scientist at CIFOR. “Those include the need to protect the rights of local and indigenous communities, and ensure a fair distribution of benefits.”

Concerns were also raised about how corruption in tropical forest countries might affect the efficiency and equity of REDD+ implementation.

“Discussions at Forest Day 3 highlighted the need for broad-based participation in REDD+ schemes,” said Frances Seymour, Director General of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), one of 15 centres supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). “Forestry ministries cannot achieve forest emission reductions without the cooperation of ministries covering areas such as agriculture, mining, planning and finance. Local governments and communities also have critical roles to play in the design and implementation.”

REDD+ seeks to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by directly compensating countries for cutting their deforestation rates. As currently envisioned, REDD+ could potentially see the transfer of US\$15-25 billion per year from developed to forest-rich developing countries. These funds would be used to implement policies to control the drivers of deforestation and degradation and to compensate forest owners for foregoing income available from converting forests to other uses. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), land conversion and deforestation emits around 1.7 billion tonnes of carbon annually, more than 17 percent of all global emissions. If properly managed, tropical forests could absorb as much as 1 billion tonnes of carbon per year and preserve habitats for thousands of plant and animal species.

“It’s now clear that without action on forest-related emissions, the international community has no chance of keeping global warming below the 2 degree threshold,” said Seymour. “Exceeding that threshold would have catastrophic implications for hundreds of millions of people. Reaching a deal on forests could buy time for other emissions measures to come on stream.”

REDD+ is seen as a crucial part of a new global climate pact, and there is increasing convergence among decision makers and interest groups over how the mechanism should be implemented at the national level and below. A major outcome of FD3 has been to contribute to the building of consensus among the broad range of actors in the forest sector and beyond on how REDD+ can be successfully implemented globally and nationally to ensure it contributes to climate mitigation and sustainable forest management and development.

“With a potential agreement on the horizon, and a growing consensus about what needs to be done, the forestry community is now mobilising to realise the potential of REDD+ on the ground,” said Seymour.

The FD3 summary statement prepared by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests was presented to Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the IPCC, at the end of the meeting.

###

Key speakers at FD3:

- **Elinor Ostrom**, 2009 Nobel Laureate for Economic Science and political economist at Indiana University
- **Rajendra K. Pachari**, Chairman of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Director General of Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI)
- **Gro Harlem Brundtland**, Former Norwegian Prime Minister, former Secretary General of the World Health Organization and Special Envoy on Climate Change to UN Secretary General
- **Nicholas Stern**, Chair of the Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics (LSE)
- **Wangari Maathai**, Nobel Laureate and Founder of the Green Belt Movement
- **Nicholas Stern**, IG Patel Professor of Economics and Government and Chair of the Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics
- **Hillary Benn**, Minister for the Environment, UK
- **Troels Lund Poulsen**, Minister for the Environment, Denmark
- **Bill Clinton**, Former US president (by video)
- **Eduardo Braga**, Governor of Amazonas State, Brazil
- **Pham Ngoi Nguyen**, Minister of Natural Resources Viet Nam
- **Yvo De Boer**, Executive Secretary, UNFCCC

Journalists can find a blog of the day's events at <http://forestsandclimate.wordpress.com/> and further photographs at <http://www.iisd.ca/climate/cop15/fd/>

President Clinton's Forest Day Video <http://www.forestsclimatechange.org/video-clinton.html>

About the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR): CIFOR advances human wellbeing, environmental conservation and equity by conducting research to inform policies and practices that affect forests in developing countries. CIFOR helps ensure that decision making that affects forests is based on solid science and principles of good governance, and reflects the perspectives of developing countries and forest-dependent people. CIFOR is one of 15 centres within the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. For more information, please visit: www.cifor.cgiar.org.

About Forest Day 3: The day-long event took place on Sunday, 13 December. Forest Day 3 (FD3) and was hosted by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) and the Government of Denmark. Forest Day 3 will build on the success of Forest Day 1 and 2 in helping to place forests high on the agenda in current and future climate negotiations. For more information, please visit: www.forestday3.org.