



Rio+20 conference should capitalize on the values that forests offer to sustainable development

New York, 16 December 2011 - As preparations for Rio+20 continue at the 2nd Inter-sessional Meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in UN Headquarters and the International Year of Forests draws to a close, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), are calling upon countries to capitalize on forests contributions and opportunities at the upcoming Rio+20 conference.

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2011 as the International Year of Forests to raise awareness on sustainable management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests. The importance of this awareness amplifies as we seek solutions for major global challenges at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, June 2012.

Forests provide many opportunities to address some of the most pressing challenges of the 21st century. In many countries forests are key in addressing poverty, climate change, food and energy security, biodiversity conservation, gender equality, conservation of traditional knowledge and maintaining economic growth.

“In a time of climatic, economic and social change, forest ecosystems have to continue to provide services that are essential to our everyday lives now and in the future. Water, climate regulation, low carbon goods and energy and jobs for millions of under- and un-employed, are all key ingredients for our survival and prosperity” said Achim Steiner, Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme.

With forest lessons learned towards a green economy

In its submission to the preparatory process for Rio+20 the CPF stressed the lessons gain in forest ecosystem management and utilization. Lessons from both successes and failures demonstrate the importance of a holistic approach to forest ecosystem management, human well-being and socio-economic development. Overlooking the multiple benefits of forests can undermine attempts to reach the MDGs and achieving sustainable development. The CPF suggests these lessons learned are essential in transitioning to a green economy regardless of the sector or a country's economic status.

1. The pillars of sustainability (social, economic and environmental) should be treated as integral parts of a single system, including across sectors and ministries which benefit from the multitude of forest services and goods.
2. Forest ecosystems should be managed for their long-term functioning and the full range of services and beneficiaries should be accounted for as part of adaptive management and measurement of progress and wealth.
3. Participatory governance should be established around forest ecosystems.



4. For the acceleration of a transition to a green economy new investments, especially from the private sector, should be employed in forest based natural capital to rebuild, maintain and capture the opportunities forest offer to sustainable development.
5. Approaches to improve the management of forest-based natural capital and its utilization should be customized to national and local contexts while sustainable consumption and production patterns should contribute to the new green economy paradigm.

In order to do this, employment of enabling conditions, including finance, supported by relevant information on forest ecosystems and their linkages to human well-being is needed. For instance, countries need to account for the full value of forest goods and services and set cross-sectoral targets that optimize forests functioning and contributions to sustainable development. In rural and isolated areas, CPF suggests the inclusion of agroforestry and scaling up of sustainable land management would help local communities reap the multiple benefits of forests and adapting to climate change and a transition to a green low carbon development path.

“Forests are a cornerstone of the entire landscape, including wetlands, agriculture, mountains, drylands, rivers, biodiversity and people. In order to achieve sustainable development, we need an approach which integrates these diverse parts of the landscape in a cross-sectoral, cross-institutional strategy. Throughout the International Year of Forests we have celebrated everyday people who are making a difference for forests, through individual action and innovative thinking. At Rio, we must make sure that the world sees that forests hold the essence of a myriad of economic, environmental, and social values that provide for the future of the world,” says Jan McAlpine, Director of the United Nations Forum on Forests Secretariat.

Improved governance and institutional frameworks

To enact the enabling conditions, institutional frameworks need to take forests into account and mainstream their services into financial and political decision making. Capacity building, adequate land planning and the devolution of land rights need to be incorporated in institutional frameworks. Such a framework would also benefit from addressing threats to forests and conflicts in policies at an inter-sectoral level. By addressing these issues, forests could support governance structures and increase opportunities for sustainable development. In addition, cross-sectoral, cross-institutional policies on forests should be included as a way to build synergies across the broad range of sustainable development policies.

At Rio+20, the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development need to be treated as integral parts of a single system. Forests contribute to all three pillars of sustainable development; yet the three pillars have not received equal focus e.g., the social contributions of forests have been less explored and understood. By addressing actions on forests more comprehensively in national policies and institutional frameworks in the discussions at Rio+20, an easier transition to a greener economy will be possible.

For more information, please contact:

Nick Nuttall, UNEP Spokesperson/Head of Media: + 254 20 7623084, + 254 733 632755 or +41 79 596 57 37, e-mail: nick.nuttall@unep.org

Mita Sen, UN Forum on Forests Secretariat: +1 917 367 5069, fax: +1 917 367 3186, e-mail: sen@un.org.



Note to Editors:

The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) is a voluntary arrangement among 14 international organizations and secretariats with substantial programs on forests. The CPF's mission is to promote the conservation and sustainable use of all types of forest and strengthen long term political commitment to this end.

CPF members:

Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD Secretariat)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Global Environment Facility (GEF Secretariat)

International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO)

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD Secretariat)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF Secretariat)

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC Secretariat)

World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)

World Bank (World Bank)

