



GLOBAL REPORT CITES PROGRESS IN SLOWING FOREST LOSSES

A number of regions in the world are reversing centuries of deforestation and are now showing an increase in forest area, according to FAO's *State of the World's Forests* report. The report underlines the positive effects of economic prosperity and careful forest management in saving forests, noting that over 100 countries have established national forest programmes.

Global forest cover amounts to just under 4 billion ha, covering about 30 percent of the world's land area. From 1990 to 2005, the world lost 3 percent of its total forest area, an average decrease of some 0.2 percent per year, according to FAO data.

From 2000 to 2005, 57 countries reported an increase in forest area, and 83 reported a decrease. However, the net forest loss remains at 7.3 million ha per year or 20 000 ha per day, equivalent to an area twice the size of Paris.

Ten countries account for 80 percent of the world's primary forests, of which Indonesia, Mexico, Papua New Guinea and Brazil saw the highest losses in primary forest in the five years from 2000 to 2005.

In Asia and the Pacific, net forest area increased in that same period, reversing the downward trend of the preceding decades. The increase was mainly in East Asia, where large investments in forest plantations in China were high enough to offset high rates of deforestation in other areas. The net loss of forest area actually accelerated in Southeast Asia between 2000 and 2005.

Rapid economic growth may help to create the conditions for sustainable forest management, the report said. Forest institutions in the region are getting stronger in a number of countries, and the trend towards more participatory decision-making continues. On the other hand, illegal logging is increasing in some countries. Forest fires may increase in severity if the global climate continues to become warmer.

Forests are obtaining political support and commitment at the highest levels in Africa. Latin American countries have formed networks to fight fires, to increase the effectiveness of protected area management and to improve watershed management. These measures are expected to improve forest management in the two regions.

Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean are currently the two regions with the highest losses. Africa, which

accounts for about 16 percent of the total global forest area, lost over 9 percent of its forests between 1990 and 2005. Latin America and the Caribbean, with over 47 percent of the world's forests saw an increase in the annual net loss between 2000 and 2005, from 0.46 to 0.51 percent.

Europe and North America showed net increases in forest area over the reporting period. [Source: FAO Newsroom, 13 March 2007.]

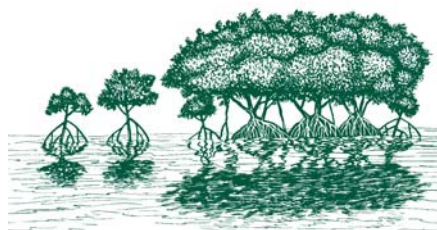


BORNEO CONSERVATION DEAL SIGNED

A tri-nation deal has been signed to protect 200 000 km² of rain forest on the island of Borneo. Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam have pledged to protect the area, known as the "Heart of Borneo".

The area is considered one of the most important sites of biodiversity in the world, home to thousands of species. It is threatened by plantation and logging companies, as well as farmers, and researchers say half of the original forest has already been lost.

The agreement, known as the Heart of Borneo Declaration, aims to put an end to this, and protect an area prized by conservationists. [Source: BBC News, 12 February 2007.]



COUNTDOWN 2010

Countdown 2010 is a powerful network of active partners working together towards the 2010 biodiversity target. Each partner commits efforts to tackle the causes of biodiversity loss. The Secretariat – hosted by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) – facilitates and encourages action, promotes the importance of the 2010 biodiversity target and assesses progress towards 2010.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
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RESERVA DE LA BIÓSFERA UNIRÁ PARQUES NACIONALES DE CHILE Y ARGENTINA

La nueva y primera Reserva de la Biósfera Transfronteriza, «Bosques Templados Lluviosos de Los Andes Australes», unirá parques nacionales de Argentina y Chile, con una superficie superior a 4 millones de hectáreas y permitirá conservar y preservar de mejor forma bosques nativos no intervenidos.

Así lo destacó el Ministro de Agricultura, Álvaro Rojas, quien junto al Intendente de la Región de Los Lagos, Jaime Bertín, y la directora ejecutiva de la Corporación Nacional Forestal (Conaf), Catalina Bau, firmarán este documento en que se solicita oficialmente a la Unesco, por parte de Chile, la creación de esta reserva.

Uno de los aspectos más relevantes para Rojas es que organizaciones internacionales como la World Wildlife Fund, The World Bank y The World Resources Institute, han identificado los bosques templados lluviosos de Sudamérica entre las 200 regiones del planeta que deben ser resguardadas por su contribución única a la biodiversidad mundial.

Por su parte, Bau explicó que la biodiversidad inserta en esta nueva reserva de la biósfera, cuenta con familias endémicas de plantas y animales, entre los que se cuentan especialmente las especies arbóreas más longevas del mundo, como el alerce y la araucaria, y entre los animales, como el marsupial más primitivo del planeta, el monito del monte.

Fuente: El Mercurio, 28/3/07 en INFOR, 29 de marzo de 2007.



ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL PARK IN FRENCH GUIANA WILL ALSO ENHANCE PROTECTION IN BRAZILIAN AMAZONIA

Fifteen years after the process was begun, on 28 February, a decree established the Amazonian Park of Guiana, in French

Guiana. With almost 2 million ha under full protection and surrounded by a sustainable development zone of nearly 1.3 million ha, the area is the largest French conservation unit and it will become part of the complex formed by the Tumucumaque Mountains National Park in Amapá, and two state-protected areas in Pará, established in November last year: the Maicuru Biological Reserve and the Grão-Pará Ecological Station.

"In all, a little over 11 million ha of contiguous Amazonian lands will be under full protection, becoming the largest contiguous fully protected area of tropical forest on Earth," commemorated the Secretary-General of WWF-Brazil, Denise Hamú.

These three Brazilian full protection conservation units and the recently established national park are also part of an even larger mosaic, formed by 14 other full protection conservation units and 20 sustainable use conservation units, with an additional 15 indigenous lands. This immense contiguous area spans roughly 48.6 million ha, most of it (nearly 45 million ha) in Brazil, plus the part in French Guiana (a little over 3.5 million ha) and in Suriname (almost 100 000 ha). The mosaic extends from Pará to the state of Amazonas and from there to Roraima.

In addition to hindering the advance of illegal gold mining, protecting a large area of forest represents an important contribution in the struggle against deforestation, one of the main activities responsible for global warming. It is also important for the conservation of rare ecosystems, maintenance of ecological equilibrium and the survival of endangered species that require extensive territories. (Source: WWF-Brazil, 28 February 2007.)

The money will form the basis of a new Congo Basin rain forest conservation fund, to be set up under the aegis of the ten African countries surrounding the great wilderness, which at 700 000 square miles (1 812 992 km²) in extent is twice the size of France, but is increasingly threatened with development.

The United Kingdom has persuaded Professor Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan environmental campaigner and 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner, and Canada's former Prime Minister, Paul Martin, a long-standing advocate for debt relief and for African leadership in development, to oversee the fund's establishment and advise on its governance and financial management, ensuring that it has strong African ownership and supports the needs of the Congo Basin countries.

"Fifty million local people rely on the tropical rain forest of the Congo Basin for food, shelter and their livelihoods, while the world relies on it, and other rain forests, as an ecological handbrake on our rapidly changing climate," said the International Development Secretary, Hilary Benn. "But deforestation is a serious problem with nearly 6 000 square miles (15 540 km²) being destroyed every year."

The aim is to ensure that local people's livelihoods and rights are protected while helping them to manage the forest better and find livelihoods consistent with forest conservation.

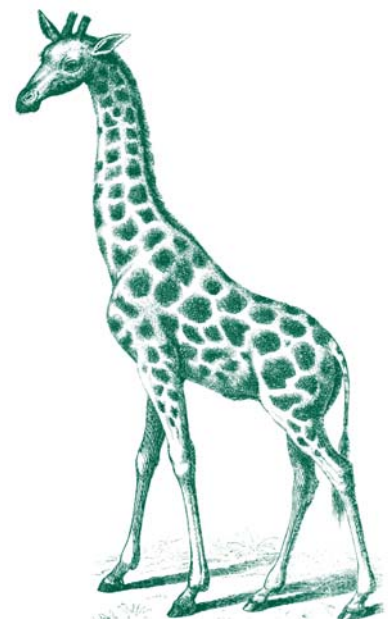
The new fund will strengthen the work of the donors who are already active in the region, including Belgium, Canada, France, Germany and the United States of America, and it will open a channel for new donors to add their support. (Source: *Belfast Telegraph* [United Kingdom], 22 March 2007.)

are equally expected to size up the milestone covered in research on African flora, vegetation of African plant habitats, database of African plants and the evolution of the African Plants Initiative (API) project.

Meeting under the theme: Systematics and Conservation of African Plants, the Yaoundé congress offers yet another opportunity for scientists to exchange views and research on conserving Africa's rich biodiversity which is being seriously threatened by human activities. According to the Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation, Madeleine Tchuinte, human threats to plant existence have increased during the past few years. This, she said, has instilled fear in Africans who one day see their plants disappear. Quite disturbing, moreover, is the fact that the majority of these plants have not been named.

In addition to plants that human beings cultivate for food, millions of plants remain in the wild, which have economic, cultural and medicinal values. "Many remain to be discovered," Mrs Tchuinte said.

The congress is a living example of North-South Cooperation. The AETFAT today counts more than 1 000 members drawn from international institutions, notably national herbariums and specialized research institutions. (Source: *Cameroon Tribune* [Yaoundé], 27 February 2007.) ♣



NEW FUND TO CONSERVE THE CONGO BASIN

The United Kingdom is to give UK£50 million towards helping to save the second-largest rain forest in the world, the Congo Basin in Central Africa.

In one of the Budget's most eye-catching and unusual items, the Chancellor Gordon Brown announced an £800m Environmental Transformation Fund, to help developing countries cope with environmental changes such as global warming; the Congo forest will be the recipient of the first major grant.

SCIENTISTS COUNT AFRICA'S ECOLOGICAL RICHES

Scientists from 43 African and European countries began meeting in Yaoundé yesterday at the 18th Congress of the Association for the Taxonomic Study of the Flora of Tropical Africa, better known by its French abbreviation, AETFAT. Among the issues to be handled by participants are those related to the taxonomy of African plants and fungi, the phytogeography of African plants, ethnobotany and the conservation of African plants. Scientists