

## Top UN official lauds Pakistan's Guinness World Record for tree planting



4 August 2009 – The top United Nations environment official has lauded Pakistan's efforts in setting a Guinness World Record for planting over 500,000 trees in one day, part of the South Asian nation's pledge in the global Billion Tree Campaign.

In the record-breaking feat, 541,176 young mangrove saplings were planted in 24 hours by 300 volunteers on 15 July without using any mechanical equipment in the vast wetlands of the Indus River Delta in Thatta District, according to a news release issued by the UN Environment Programme (**UNEP**).

The event was part of Pakistan's pledge to plant 120 million trees in UNEP's Billion Tree Campaign, which seeks to plant 7 billion trees – or one for every person on the planet, with a bit to spare – by the end of 2009.

"The Billion Tree Campaign has been setting records since it was launched in 2006 as one avenue and conduit for global public concern over climate change," **noted** UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

He added that Pakistan's Guinness World Record will contribute to the goal of 7 billion trees by December, when world leaders gather for the UN climate change conference in Denmark to "seal the deal" on a new global pact to succeed the Kyoto Protocol, which contains legally binding targets for reducing emissions.

"I am ever more confident that this record can be broken too and inspire governments to 'seal the deal' in Copenhagen in December," Mr. Steiner added.

With the destruction of natural forests emitting more greenhouse gases every year than the transport sector, planting trees – which absorb carbon dioxide and store nearly 300 gigatonnes of carbon in their biomass – is a crucial defence in the fight against global warming.

Mangroves, which are being cut down in Pakistan and other countries for fodder, fuel and timber, are particularly useful in carbon sequestration. In addition to providing a breeding ground for fish and other wildlife, mangroves protect coastlines from erosion as well as tsunamis.

The previous record for the most trees planted in a single day was held by India with 447,874 trees, UNEP noted.

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