

Humans undermine nature's help in war on climate change, UN agency warns



Fishing-reliant communities in the developing world are extremely vulnerable to climate change

7 October 2009 – Humankind is undermining a crucial natural ally in the battle against climate change through its activities in the world's oceans and marine ecosystems, such as seagrasses, salt marshes and coastal wetlands, according to the United Nations Environmental Programme (**UNEP**).

These ecosystems absorb and remove large quantities of global warming carbon emissions from the atmosphere each day, yet "the ocean's carbon capture and storage systems are being undermined by human activity, thereby harming their ability to 'sequester' greenhouse gas emissions," the agency said in a **statement** ahead of the release next week in Cape Town, South Africa, of a report on the issue.

The Blue Carbon report, compiled in collaboration with the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (**FAO**) and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**), puts some hard figures on the carbon-capturing potential of the marine environment and on the impact of marine degradation on climate change.

It also outlines the way markets might begin paying developing countries for conserving and enhancing the marine environment's carbon capture and storage services (CCS) and the links between healthy oceans and adaptation to climate change.

Currently, several developed countries are considering spending billions of dollar on CCS at power stations while the CCS services of natural systems, such as the seas and oceans, are tested and probably more cost effective.

The report is being launched some 60 days ahead of the crucial UN climate convention meeting in Copenhagen, where it is hoped States will adopt a new to treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period expires in 2012, with even steeper reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

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