

## Time ripe to tap into world's ecosystems to tackle climate change – UN



Cardiff Bay Wetlands Reserve, Wales

2 September 2009 – Efforts to fight climate change can receive a boost from stepped-up investment in restoring and maintaining the world's multi-trillion dollar ecosystems, ranging from forests to wetlands to river basins, according to a study backed by the United Nations Environment Programme (**UNEP**).

Rising levels of greenhouse gases are putting Earth's biological diversity under threat, and natural systems are one of the biggest untapped resources in combating climate change, the paper found.

"It is clearly emerging that investments in the planet's ecosystem infrastructure can deliver the twin 'green' economy gains of curbing and cutting emissions while assisting vulnerable communities to adapt," UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner said at the report's launch today in Berlin, Germany.

Governments, he said, are mulling multi-billion dollar investments in carbon capture and storage at power stations.

"Perhaps it is time to subject this to a full cost benefit analysis to see whether the technological option matches nature's ability to capture and store carbon – a natural system that has been perfected over millions of years and with the multiple additional benefits for water supplies up to reversing the rate of biodiversity loss," Mr. Steiner added.

The study, which updates an earlier report, is part of the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) project, which was launched by Germany and the European Commission.

It stresses that funding for forests is a top priority for governments attending December's climate change conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, where negotiations are set to conclude on a new agreement on curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

Some five gigatons of worldwide carbon dioxide emissions, representing 15 per cent of the global total, are being absorbed by forests every year, making them the “mitigation engine” of the natural world, the report noted.

Therefore, it said, investing in ecosystem-based measures could both fight global warming and poverty.

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