

Role of forests in combating global warming deserves priority at UN talks, Assembly told



Foreign Minister Sam Abal of Papua New Guinea

29 September 2009 – The vital role of forests in reducing greenhouse gas emissions deserves priority at the United Nations talks aimed at reaching a new international agreement to combat global warming, the General Assembly was told today.

Almost 20 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions – more than all the world's cars, trucks, ships and planes combined – result from deforestation and degradation of forests, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (**IPCC**).

Yet, deforestation continues at an "alarming" pace, Samuel Abal, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Immigration of Papua New Guinea, **told** the Assembly's high-level debate.

He noted that around 13 million hectares of the world's forests are being lost annually – an area the size of Denmark, Norway and Belgium combined.

This made it all the more urgent to ensure the resources to carry out the UN Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (**UN-REDD**) initiative, he stated.

Launched by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon last year, UN-REDD compensates developing countries for reducing carbon emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

"Without rapid and significant reductions in emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, added to deep emissions reductions by rich countries, it may be impossible to avoid global warming levels that prove catastrophic for many vulnerable nations," Mr. Abal said.

He added that to succeed on this issue rich countries must come forward and take the lead. "Without their collective leadership on emission reductions, finance and technology, governments of developing countries will not be able to make a compelling case at home to get people to allow trees to be left standing."

Hassan Wirajuda, Indonesia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, also highlighted the need to give the role of forests the priority it deserves, adding that "we cannot allow the negotiation process to be derailed: the stakes are too high.

"We need not even wait for a consensus," he **said**, noting that alliances can be forged to carry out concrete projects such as the Indonesia Forest Carbon Partnership, which assists developing countries in their efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation by providing value to standing forests.

Mr. Wirajuda added that Indonesia will be hosting a ministerial meeting in Jakarta next month on the issue of forests.

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