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## India's contribution pushes UN global campaign to over 10 billion trees planted



25 February 2010 – India, the world's second most populous country, announced today that it is coming on board the United Nations Environment Programme (**UNEP**) campaign to cover the world with billions of trees, pushing the total number planted so far to more than 10 billion since the movement started in 2006.

The South Asian nation is one of the fastest-growing economies in the region and is among the world's largest consumers of wood products. With a significant proportion of its population depending on land, intense pressure is placed on forests, while overgrazing is also contributing to desertification.

India, where forestry forms the second largest use of land, has kicked off a tree-planting scheme to combat land degradation and desertification, including windbreaks and shelterbelts to protect agricultural land.

"It is wonderful to have India join a campaign that will give so much in terms of trees and the future of the planet," **said** UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

The campaign reached its 7 billionth tree – one for every person on the planet – last September when China signed on and contributed nearly 3 billion trees, which alone was an "enormous achievement." But thanks to India's participation, he said, it has now surpassed the 10 billion mark.

This accomplishment shows the extent to which the movement has galvanized not just governments, but people worldwide, Mr. Steiner pointed out. "It is this kind of solidarity that will make a difference for moving economies toward a low carbon and sustainable world."

Also today, the UNEP chief, along with a senior Indonesian official, underscored the crucial role played by marine and coastal ecosystems in sequestering carbon in the fight against climate change – also known as ‘blue carbon.’

The sea and its ecosystems – which are increasingly disrupted by the emission of greenhouse gases – play an important part in maintaining the balance of carbon absorption.

“We already know that marine and coastal ecosystems are multi-trillion dollar assets linked to sectors such as tourism, shipping and fisheries,” Mr. Steiner said. “Now it is emerging that they are natural allies against climate change.”

He and Fadel Muhammad, Indonesia’s Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, issued a joint statement at the 11th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council underway in Bali, Indonesia, appealing to “all countries to preserve these abilities of coastal and marine ecosystems as important variables in the global climate change dynamic.”

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