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UN report urges greater green efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean



Eroded and deforested slopes in Jamaica's Blue Mountains

17 February 2010 – A new United Nations report calls for greater efforts to advance environmentally sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean, which has witnessed the constant reduction of forest areas and the sustained increase of carbon dioxide emissions.

According to "Millennium Development Goals: Advances in Environmentally Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean," the rate of deforestation in the region is double the global average.

Between 1990 and 2005, the region's forest cover decreased by 7 per cent, losing nearly 69 million hectares of forest, states the report, which was published by the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (**ECLAC**) and launched today in Mexico.

Nearly 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. In 2008 the UN launched the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN-REDD) initiative aimed at combating climate change through creating incentives to reverse the trend of deforestation.

In addition to the loss of forest cover, the region has also experienced an increase of nearly 41 per cent from 1990 to 2005 of carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels and cement production.

Ensuring environmental sustainability is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**) world leaders have pledged to achieve by 2015. Among the targets contained within "MDG 7" is to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

The targets also include reducing biodiversity loss, increasing the population's access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation and significantly improving the lives of slum dwellers.

The report notes that from 1990 to 2005 the total surface of protected areas grew 120 per cent, consumption of ozone-depleting substances declined by 85 per cent and coverage of drinking water and basic sanitation rose by 10 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively. At the same time, these numbers vary greatly by geographical areas and income levels in each country.

With only five years left until the 2015 deadline, the report calls for adopting a "proactive" approach to stepping up efforts to advance environmental sustainability in the region, especially in light of the new challenges posed by climate change.

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