



## UN gives hope to Rwandan communities ravaged by climate change



18 September 2010 – Once home to many chimpanzees and golden monkeys, landslides, floods and torrential rains have destroyed thousands of hectares of land in Rwanda's Gishwati Forest.

A United Nations-led scheme seeks provide hope to the region after decades of severe environmental degradation exacerbated by extreme weather events which have claimed lives and demolished homes.

In a bid to reduce local communities' vulnerability to climate change, the pilot project – jointly implemented by the UN Environment Programme (**UNEP**) and the UN Development (**UNDP**), with funding from the Danish Foreign Ministry – has mapped and developed a comprehensive plan for land sustainability and use.

Risk studies carried out by UNEP and UNDP found that to avoid further erosion in Gishwati, 43 per cent of the terrain should be used for pasture, forest plantation and fruit tree plantation, with half of that land to be protected from invasive human activities.

The project also developed technical manuals to help local government and communities better manage forest resources. The manuals provide detailed information field validation for carbon sequestration, land suitability for planting high-value crops, soil resilience, sustainable farming systems, bridging food security critical periods, and strategies to cope with climate variability.

For its part, the Rwandan Government has allocated \$25 million to relocate people from Gishwati to safer areas.

The UN project is part of a larger programme – Climate Change and Development Project – Adapting by Reducing Vulnerability (**CC DARE**) – that helps countries in sub-Saharan Africa and small island States integrate climate change adaptation into national development planning through the use of small funds for targeted short-term activities not exceeding six months.

“Integrating adaptation into national development policies can strengthen the ecosystems and thus the economy against the impacts of climate change. Rwanda is setting an early and a positive example of how Africa can address current and perhaps more importantly future climate vulnerability while also assisting towards meeting the poverty-related Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**),” said UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner.

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