



PRESS RELEASE

New US\$4.38 million UN programme signed to combat deforestation and climate change

HA NOI, 17 September 2009 – A new UN programme to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in Viet Nam is being launched today at a workshop in Ha Noi. The US\$4.38 million programme is being funded by the Government of Norway and will run for almost two years. It is a joint programme between three UN organizations – FAO, UNDP and UNEP – and will be executed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Lam Dong province has been selected as the pilot site.

The main goal of the UN Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) in Viet Nam is to support the Government to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, aiming to create financial incentives for Viet Nam to preserve and improve its forests. This will help to combat climate change, conserve biodiversity and reverse land degradation and desertification. Over half of Viet Nam's natural forests are considered poor or regenerating and rich and closed-canopy forests constitute just over nine percent.

Setsuko Yamazaki, UNDP Country Director comments: "We hope that this collaborative UN programme will be able to quickly demonstrate that the costs associated with deforestation outweigh the immediate economic benefits of cutting down trees."

Curbing deforestation and forest degradation are substantial steps in responding to climate change and promote win-win solution. For example, mangrove forests support livelihoods and protect people from surge storm and floods and also absorb and store carbon. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, deforestation and forest degradation produces nearly 20 percent of all carbon emissions caused by humans and is a major factor contributing to climate change.

Viet Nam is one of nine pilot countries in the world to have been chosen for the UN-REDD programme and it is the first pilot country to fully start implementing activities that will help to reduce deforestation and forest degradation. Lessons learnt by Viet Nam will be useful for other pilot countries and the wider international community.

"We believe Viet Nam can become one of the success stories of REDD that will be told to the world to help convince world leaders that REDD is possible. The experiences gained, the capacities built and the cooperation established through the joint efforts of the Government of Viet Nam and the UN-REDD programme will help catalyze a successful outcome for REDD in Copenhagen this year," says Ambassador Stale Torstein Risa.

As part of a climate change mitigation instrument, REDD is likely to be approved at COP15 – the climate change conference in Copenhagen in December. It will provide financial incentives for developing countries to stop illegal logging of forests and a mechanism for countries to offset their carbon emissions by investing in projects that promote sustainable forest management.

The UN-REDD programme will provide Viet Nam with institutional and technical capacity to pilot REDD initiatives. The programme will focus on building capacity to implement REDD, both at the national and sub-national level, through activities in Lam Dong. The programme will also look at ways to promote cooperation among the countries of the lower Mekong basin to avoid cross-border leakages of emissions.

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The Mission of the United Nations in Viet Nam

The United Nations, in partnership with the government and people of Viet Nam, works to ensure that all Vietnamese people enjoy an increasingly healthy and prosperous life with greater human dignity and expanded choices. Collectively and through its individual agencies, the United Nations cares and creates opportunities for the poor and most vulnerable, and for youth, to whom the future belongs.

In accordance with the United Nations Charter and Millennium Declaration, the United Nations advances the principles of equality and social justice, while providing impartial advice, technical expertise, access to global knowledge and local experience to meet Viet Nam's development challenges.

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